YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

STORY AND ART BY SHIN MASHIBA

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WORDS

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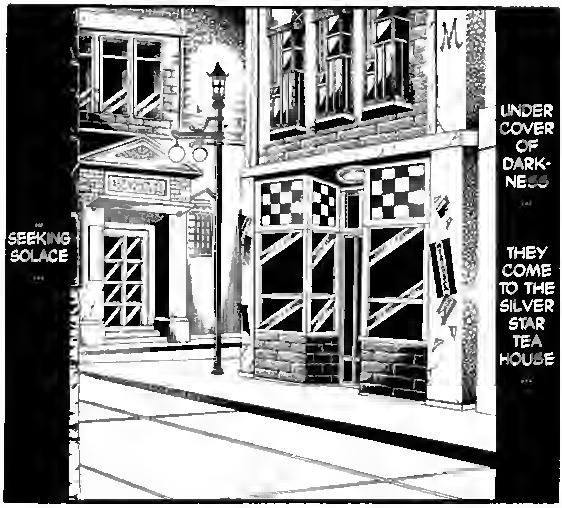
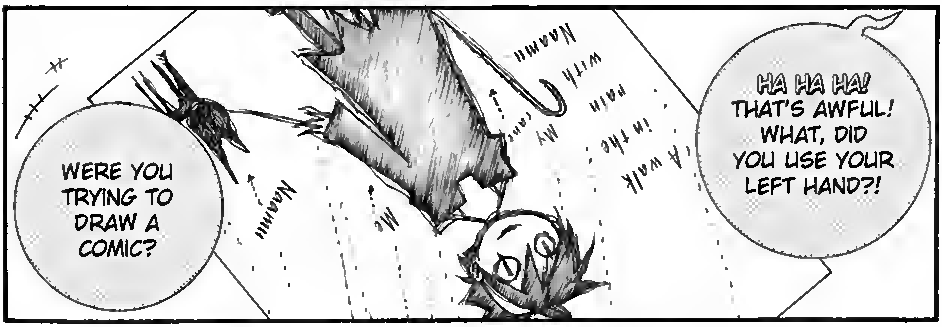
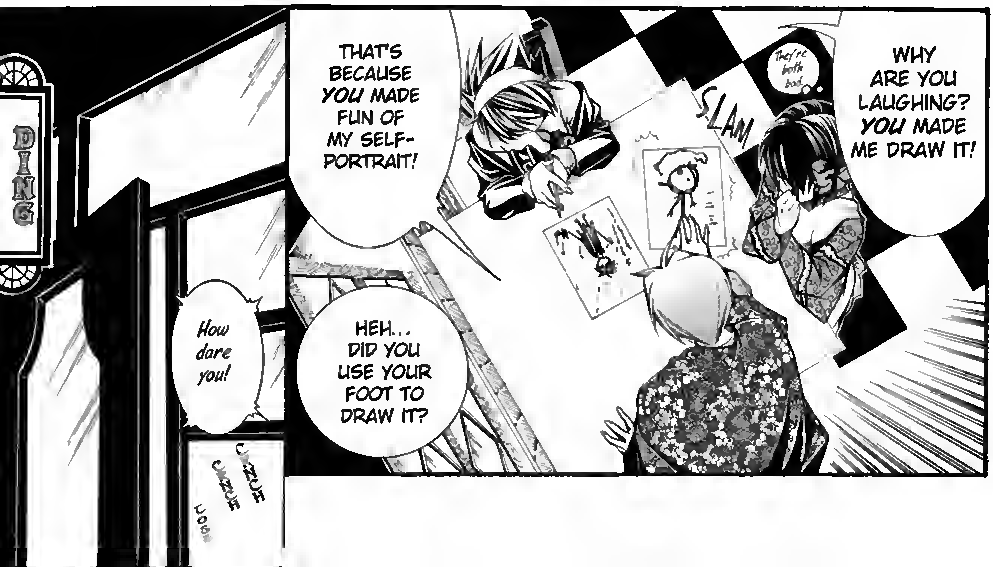
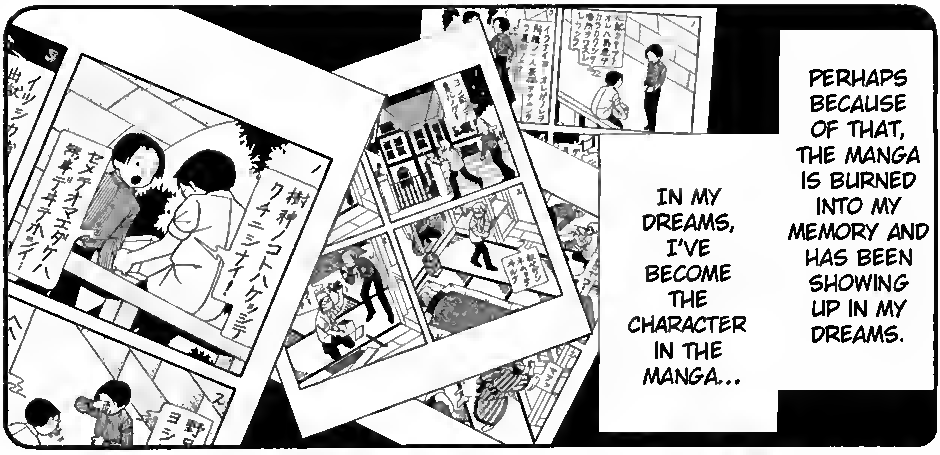



WERE YOU TRYING TO DRAW A COMIC?
HA HA HA! THAT'S AWFUL! WHAT, DID YOU USE YOUR LEFT HAND?!
A walk in the rain with my cane
Me
Nnnnnn
Nnnnnn


DING
How dare you!
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU MADE FUN OF MY SELF-PORTRAIT!
HEH... DID YOU USE YOUR FOOT TO DRAW IT?
SLAM
They're both bad.
WHY ARE YOU LAUGHING? YOU MADE ME DRAW IT!

I'M KODAMA. ARE YOU HIRUKO THE BAKU?
YES, IS IT ABOUT A NIGHTMARE?
FIRST, CAN YOU TAKE A LOOK AT THIS?
SWIP
OH, IT'S A MANGA!
A real one!

HE EVEN DREW HIMSELF AS THE MAIN CHARACTER.
DID YOU DRAW THIS?
NO, MY FRIEND NORO, A MANGA ARTIST, DREW IT.
WHAT?
ORIGINALLY THERE WERE SEVEN PAGES, BUT I BURNT THE REST.
HMM, HE DREW A MANGA OF HIMSELF? UH-OH, IT'S A BIT MESSY... THERE'S AN INK BLOT HERE.
YOU SEE, HE DREW ME INTO THOSE PAGES TOO.
SOMETHING THAT HE CAN'T SAY IN FRONT OF OTHERS...?
UH... I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT HERE...
WHY DID YOU BURN IT? WAS THERE SOMETHING ABOUT THIS MANGA?


IN MY DREAMS, I'VE BECOME THE CHARACTER IN THE MANGA...
PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THAT, THE MANGA IS BURNED INTO MY MEMORY AND HAS BEEN SHOWING UP IN MY DREAMS.

AND THAT YOU'VE ENTERED THE MANGA.
TAP TAP
SO YOU MEAN THAT THE BURNT PART OF THE MANUSCRIPT EXISTS IN YOUR DREAMS.
YES... EVER SINCE NORO SENT ME THE MANGA A FEW DAYS AGO.

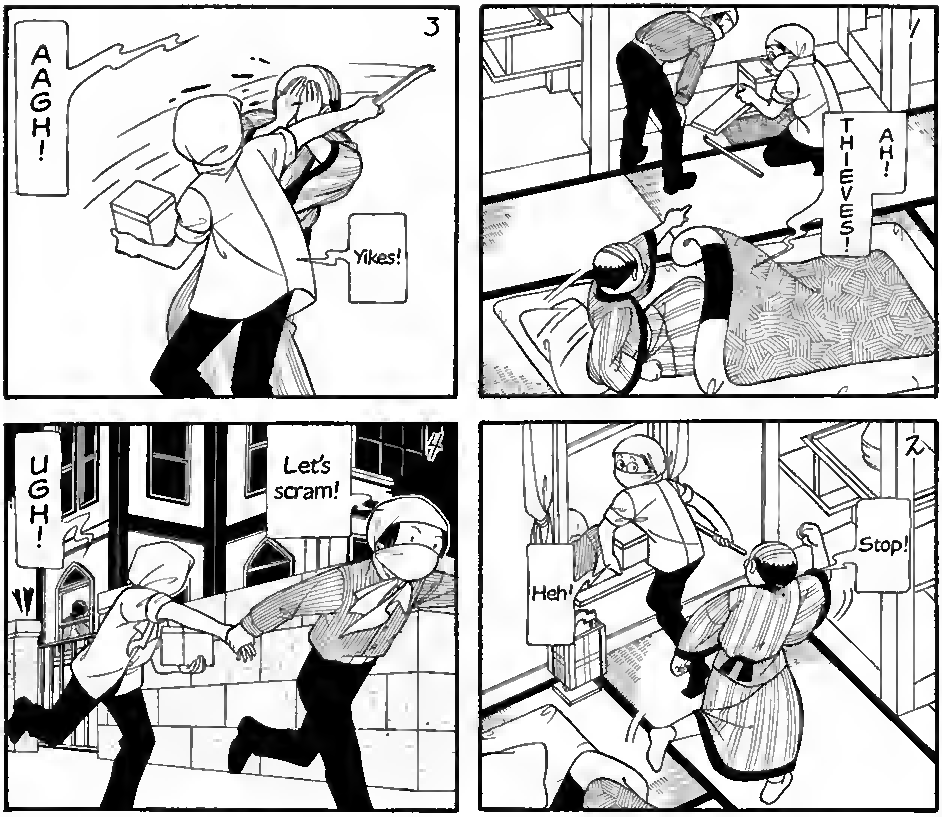
WELL, LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE DREAM.
HOOH
THERE MUST BE SOMETHING IN THE MANGA THAT KODAMA WANTS TO FORGET BUT CAN'T.

SLEEP NOW
LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND

KODAMA IS TRAPPED INSIDE THE MANGA.

1
I wonder if there's a way to get out of this financial rut.
2
Your uncle is rich, isn't he?
But he's a real miser. No one knows where he keeps all his valuables.
3
Oh! Except one! A long time ago he took something out of its hiding place to show off.
A famous tea bowl.
4
He probably wasn't cautious 'cause you were a kid, eh? I wonder how much it's worth?
Hmm, who knows...
HEH... SLACKERS
FLAP

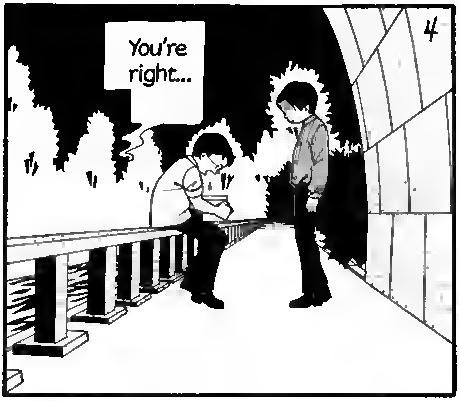
3
It was here.
Let's steal it and then pawn it!
4
Got it! It was still here!
2
Uncle is sleeping.
THAT'S WHY KODAMA DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT IN FRONT OF HIFUMI.
FLAP
THIS IS A TRUE STORY.


3
AAGH!
Yikes!
AH!
THIEVES!
UGH!
Let's scram!
Heh!
Stop!

BUT WHY WOULD NORO DRAW IT IN THE FIRST PLACE?
I SEE... NO WONDER KODAMA BURNED THE MANGA.

3
Wait! You idiot! Weren't you the only one who knew where it was hidden?
He'll know it was you!

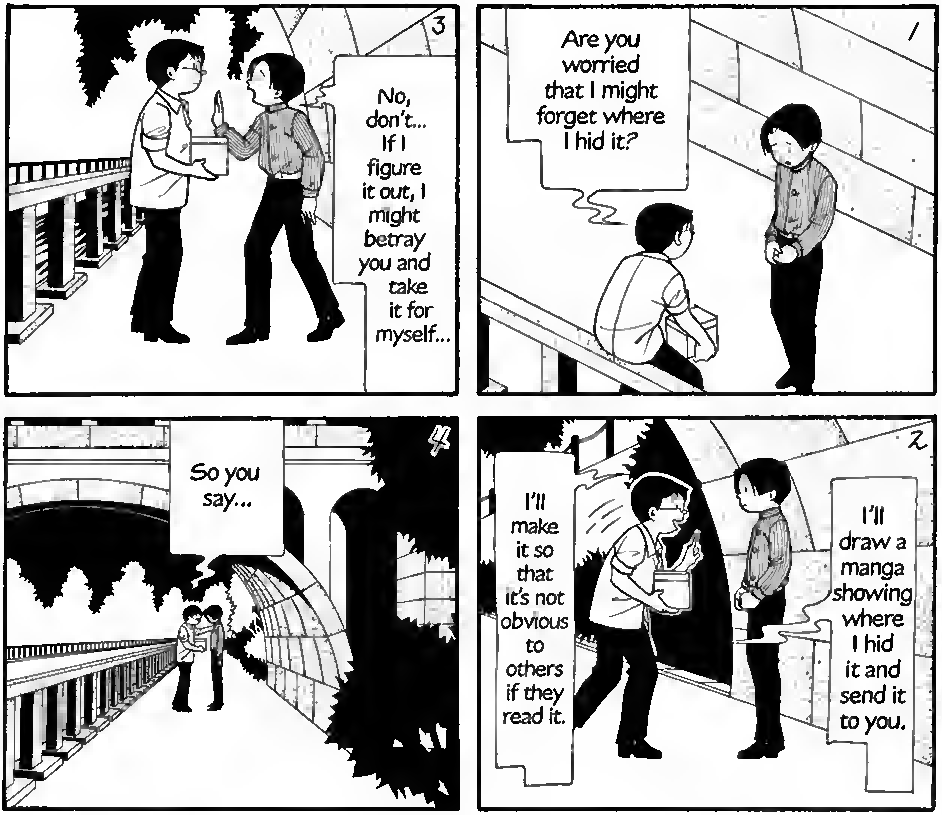
1
We got the tea bowl!

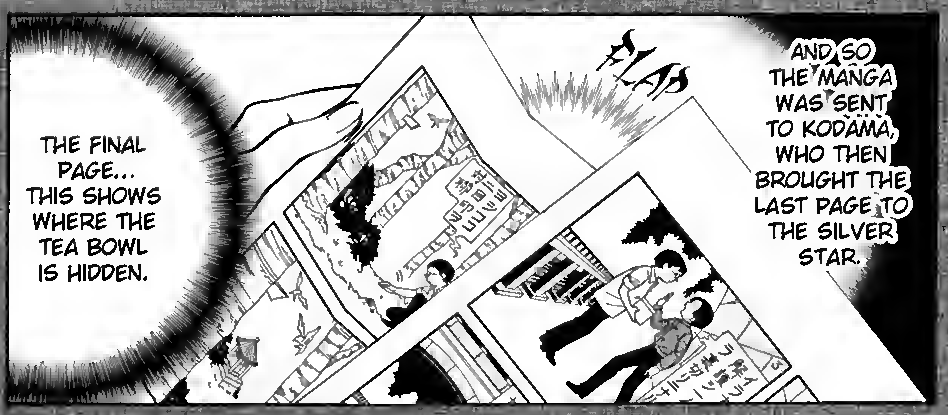

4
You're right...

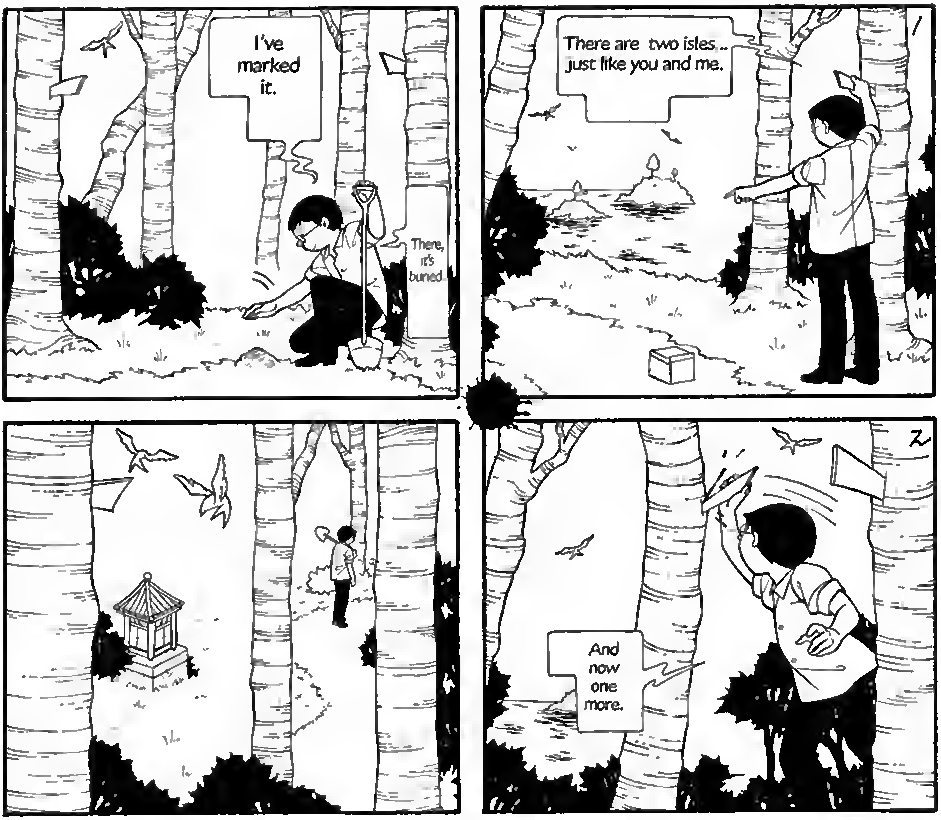
2
But Noro, you hurt your uncle.
He didn't see my face so it should be okay.

DID KODAMA ENCOURAGE NORO TO DO IT KNOWING THIS?
FLAP
THEY SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THIS WOULD HAPPEN.

1
I won't tell anyone you were involved too.
At least you will be safe.
2
Noro, you're too nice...
Heh heh. I'll go hide the tea bowl far away.
3
If I get caught, we can split the money when I get out of prison.
We'll drink to it.
4
Until that day, don't forget me...
NORO...


1
Are you worried that I might forget where I hid it?
2
I'll draw a manga showing where I hid it and send it to you.
I'll make it so that it's not obvious to others if they read it.
3
No, don't... If I figure it out, I might betray you and take it for myself...
4
So you say...

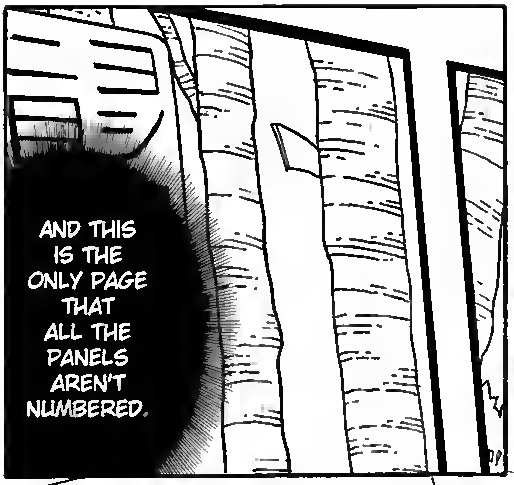

THE FINAL PAGE... THIS SHOWS WHERE THE TEA BOWL IS HIDDEN.
SLAP
AND SO THE MANGA WAS SENT TO KODAMA, WHO THEN BROUGHT THE LAST PAGE TO THE SILVER STAR.


I've marked it.
There, it's buried.
There are two isles... just like you and me.
1
And now one more.
2

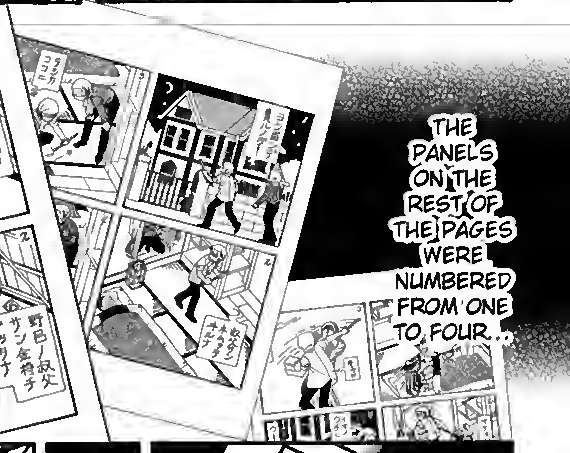
SO KODAMA DIDN'T BURN THIS PAGE BECAUSE IT SHOWED WHERE IT WAS HIDDEN. BUT HE COULDN'T FIGURE IT OUT... AND AFTER TRYING SO HARD, HE BECAME TRAPPED IN THIS MANGA.
I SEE... THERE'S NO TELLING WHERE THESE ISLANDS ARE.

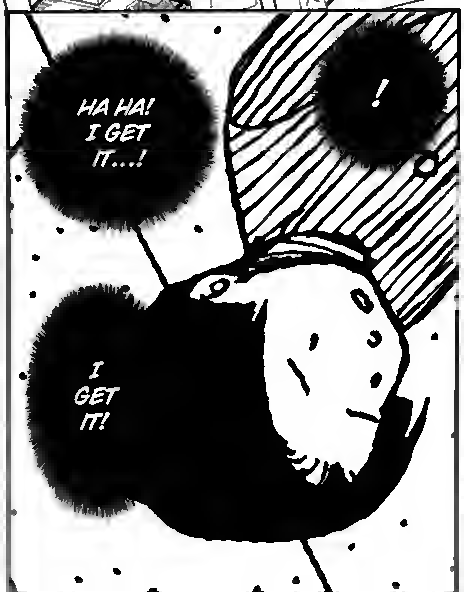
BUT, YOU WANTED ME TO WORK IT OUT FOR YOU, DIDN'T YOU?
DO YOU THINK I'M DESPICABLE?
I COULDN'T WORK IT OUT, NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRIED... AND THE MORE I COULDN'T FIGURE IT OUT, THE MORE IT HAUNTED ME. I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE TEA BOWL...
ANSWER ME, KODAMA.
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE PART OF THE MANGA, YOU MUST STILL BE ABLE TO UNDER-STAND.
WILL YOU HELP ME?
THE PLACEMENT OF THE TWO ISLANDS AND THE SEA HE DREW SHOULD BE A HINT.
HEH HEH... MAYBE IT'LL BE EASIER IF I GO INSIDE?
I HAVE NO REASON NOT TO.
BUT IT'S NOT GOING TO BE EASY.

PHEW
HUH?
JUMP
POKE
AGH!
THESE TWO BALLOONS ARE THE SAME HEIGHT.

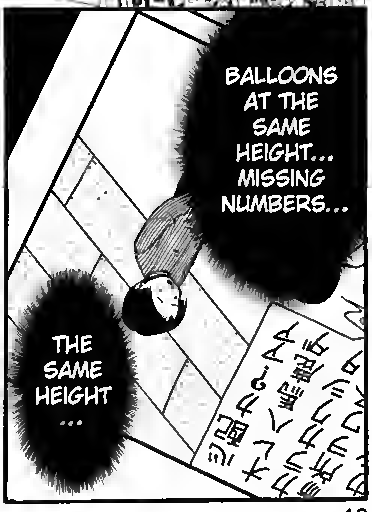

AND THIS IS THE ONLY PAGE THAT ALL THE PANELS AREN'T NUMBERED.

対聯

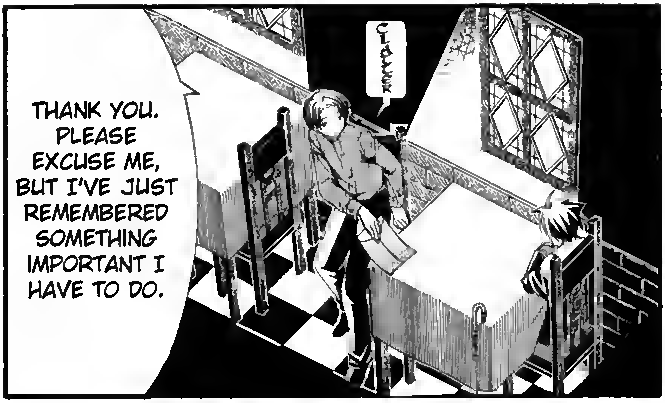

THE PANELS ON THE REST OF THE PAGES WERE NUMBERED FROM ONE TO FOUR...

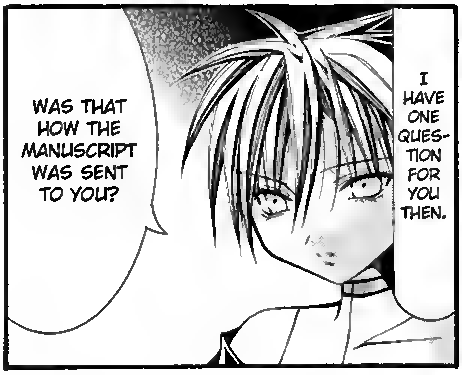

HA HA! I GET IT...!
!
I GET IT!

HMM? WHAT IF I WERE TO...


BALLOONS AT THE SAME HEIGHT... MISSING NUMBERS...
THE SAME HEIGHT ...

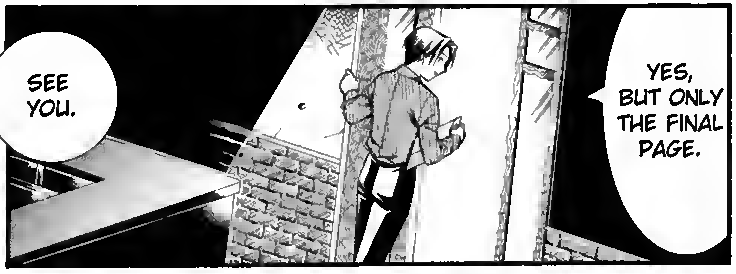
HIRUKO! THANKS TO YOU, I NOW KNOW WHERE THE BOWL IS!
NOW THAT I KNOW, I WON'T BE TRAPPED BY THIS DREAM ANYMORE.
THEN SINCE WE'RE ALL SQUARED AWAY HERE...
TIME TO WAKE UP.


CLANK
THANK YOU. PLEASE EXCUSE ME, BUT I'VE JUST REMEMBERED SOMETHING IMPORTANT I HAVE TO DO.


I HAVE ONE QUESTION FOR YOU THEN.
WAS THAT HOW THE MANUSCRIPT WAS SENT TO YOU?

AND TO ADMIT TO THE THEFT...
ANOTHER THING, PLEASE DON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT WHAT YOU SAW IN THE MANGA... I DON'T WANT NORA'S SACRIFICE TO BE IN VAIN.

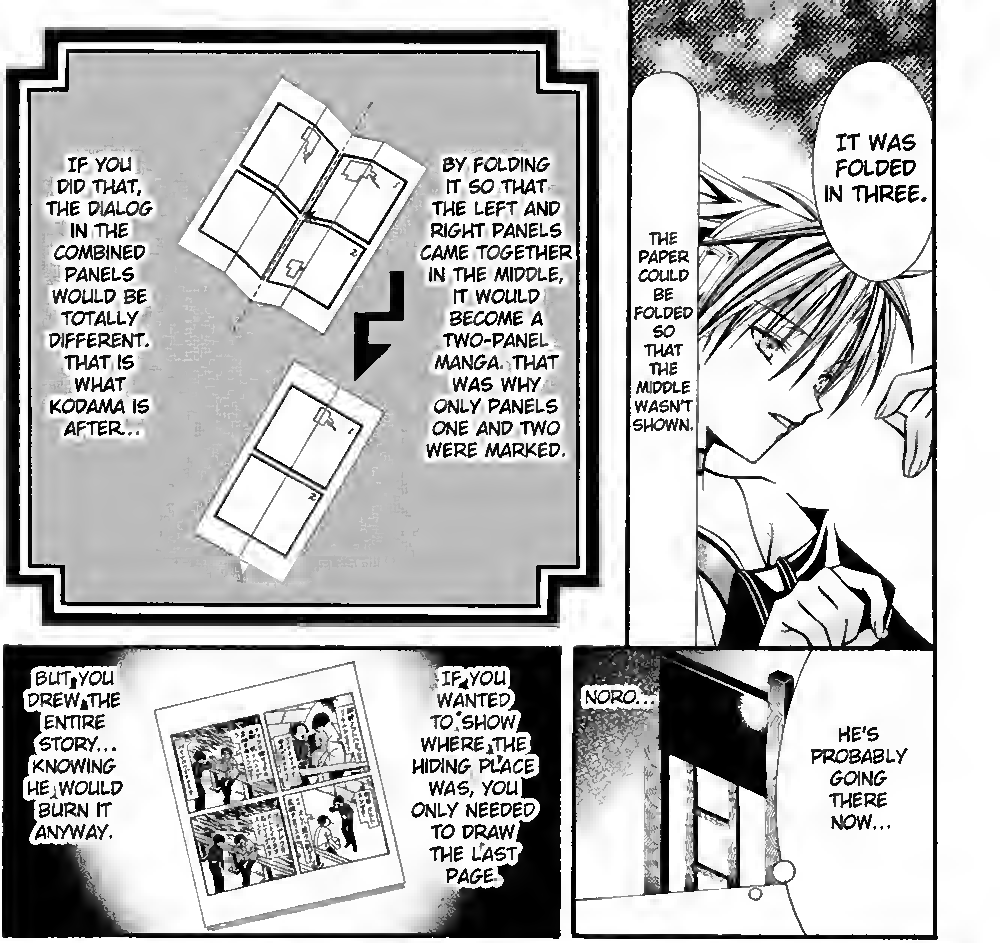
DING


SEE YOU.
YES, BUT ONLY THE FINAL PAGE.

WELL...
WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT?
DID YOU FIGURE IT OUT?

THEN THAT INKBLOT...

I THOUGHT SO...!!


IT WAS FOLDED IN THREE.
THE PAPER COULD BE FOLDED SO THAT THE MIDDLE WASN'T SHOWN.
BY FOLDING IT SO THAT THE LEFT AND RIGHT PANELS CAME TOGETHER IN THE MIDDLE, IT WOULD BECOME A TWO-PANEL MANGA. THAT WAS WHY ONLY PANELS ONE AND TWO WERE MARKED.
IF YOU DID THAT, THE DIALOG IN THE COMBINED PANELS WOULD BE TOTALLY DIFFERENT. THAT IS WHAT KODAMA IS AFTER...
1
2
1
2
IF YOU WANTED TO SHOW WHERE THE HIDING PLACE WAS, YOU ONLY NEEDED TO DRAW THE LAST PAGE.
BUT YOU DREW THE ENTIRE STORY... KNOWING HE WOULD BURN IT ANYWAY.
NORO...
HE'S PROBABLY GOING THERE NOW...
"I want us to be friends forever..."
...HOPED FOR THE BEST WHEN YOU ENTRUSTED THIS TO KODAMA.
"Don't betray me..."
YOU MUST HAVE...
BUT IT WAS ALL FOR NAUGHT...

RSCL
A FEW DAYS LATER...
*TOTTORI
鳥取
HE MEANT TOTTORI PREFECTURE.
STUPID NORO.
IT HAD NOTHING TO WITH THE SEA OR THE ISLANDS.

THE TEA BOWL IS HERE.
SMIRK
NOT REALIZING THAT IT WAS ALL PART OF MY MASTER PLAN.
SO STUPID THAT YOU TOOK ALL THE BLAME.
I LIKED THE WAY YOU WERE SO TRUSTING.
HE HID IT SOMEWHERE THAT WE HAD BEEN TOGETHER.
YES, WE CAME HERE BEFORE...
THE TEA BOWL IS BURIED BETWEEN THE TWO POINTS.
THIS IS THE SAME SCENERY AS THE MANGA... AND THE STAKES IN THE TREES ARE MARKING WHERE IT'S BURIED.

AH, FINALLY ...
HEH ...
HEH HEH ...
YES, NORO WAS AN IDIOT. BUT HE MADE SURE TO GET THE LAST LAUGH.
...THAT WAS WRITTEN INTO THE MANGA.
THERE WAS A WARNING TO THE BETRAYER...
THE BLACK BLOT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PAGE.
YOU NOTICED IT TOO, RIGHT?
What is it?
I WONDER IF KODAMA WILL REALIZE THAT...
A WARNING?

HE PUT IT THERE ON PURPOSE.
THAT WASN'T AN ACCIDENT.
HEH HEH... THINK ABOUT IT AGAIN.
IF YOU FOLD THE PAPER IN TOWARDS THE CENTER, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BLOT?
...
IT DISAPPEARS.

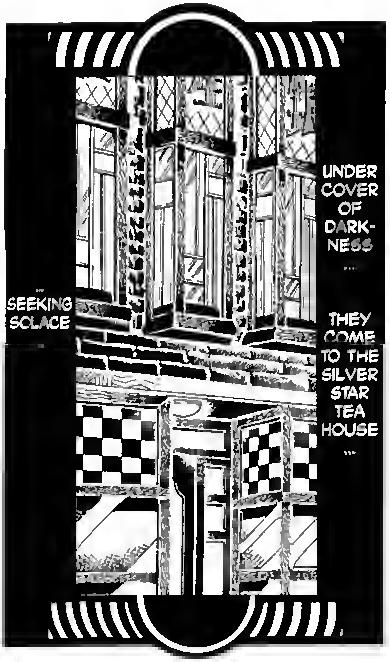
BUT HIS WHEREABOUTS... AND THE TRUE HIDING PLACE...

ONLY NORO KNOWS ...

WITH NO ACCOMPLICE, THE TEA BOWL IS ALL NORO'S NOW!

The Forty-Third Night: Board Game

G-GOOD EVENING.
SHIVER


UNDER COVER OF DARK-NESS ...
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE ...
...SEEKING SOLACE

I'M KIYOSHI MASAME.
I HAVE SOMETHING THAT I'D LIKE TO ENTRUST TO YOU, THE BAKU.
ENTRUST? WHAT KIND OF NIGHTMARE IS IT?

A BOARD GAME, HUH? A LOT OF THEM ARE ABOUT LIFE OR HAVE SOME MORAL LESSON...
MUNCH MUNCH
WELL... FOR A FEW DAYS NOW, I'VE BEEN HAVING A DREAM ABOUT A BOARD GAME.
Give up on Riwa
I think about Riwa all day.
THE BOARD GAME IN MY NIGHTMARE IS ABOUT MY FUTURE.
I THINK I CAN GUESS WHAT YOU WANT TO ENTRUST ME WITH ANYWAY.
NO.
IT'D BE QUICKER IF I TAKE A LOOK AT IT.
DO YOU NEED MORE DETAILS?
GULP

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

START
1
START
2
Fall in love with Riwa at first sight
SKIP A TURN
3
Think about Riwa all day
GO BACK
4
Give up on Riwa
Return to the START
5
Decide to stay with Riwa
6
Marry Riwa

THE GAME DEPICTS HOW WE MET, AS WELL AS OUR UNKNOWN FUTURE.
RIWA IS A GIRL I'VE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH IN REAL LIFE.
START
WHO'S THE GIRL?
MY DREAM ALWAYS BEGINS AT THE START.
IT LOOKS LIKE A HAPPY ENDING FROM THE OUTSET.
START
UNKNOWN? THEN WHY IS THERE THIS DRAWING AT THE BEGINNING? IT SEEMS PRETTY CLEAR HOW THE FUTURE WILL BE...
BUT IN MY NIGHT-MARE...
THOSE ARE JUST MY HOPES.

EVERY NIGHT I BECOME A PLAYING PIECE. I ROLL THE DIE AND MOVE THE NUMBER SHOWN.
START
ROLL
I STARTED SEEING THIS DREAM A FEW DAYS AGO. THAT DAY I HAD BEEN TAKING AN EVENING STROLL ALONG THE SHORE.
5
Decide to stay with Riwa
2
Fall in love with Riwa at first sight

I GLANCED UP AT THE CLIFF...
...AND SAW HER.
THE EVENING LIGHT ENVELOPED HER IN SORROW.
SHE STOLE MY HEART...
?!
WHAT ARE YOU—?!
DON'T DO IT!

SHE WOULD GO TO THE CLIFF EVERY EVENING AT THE SAME TIME AND LAMENT HER FATE.

RIWA WAS GOING TO BE SOLD OFF TO PAY BACK HER PARENTS' DEBT.

SKIP A TURN 3

Think about Riwa all day

AHH... DO I HELP HER?

OR DO I LEAVE HER?

2

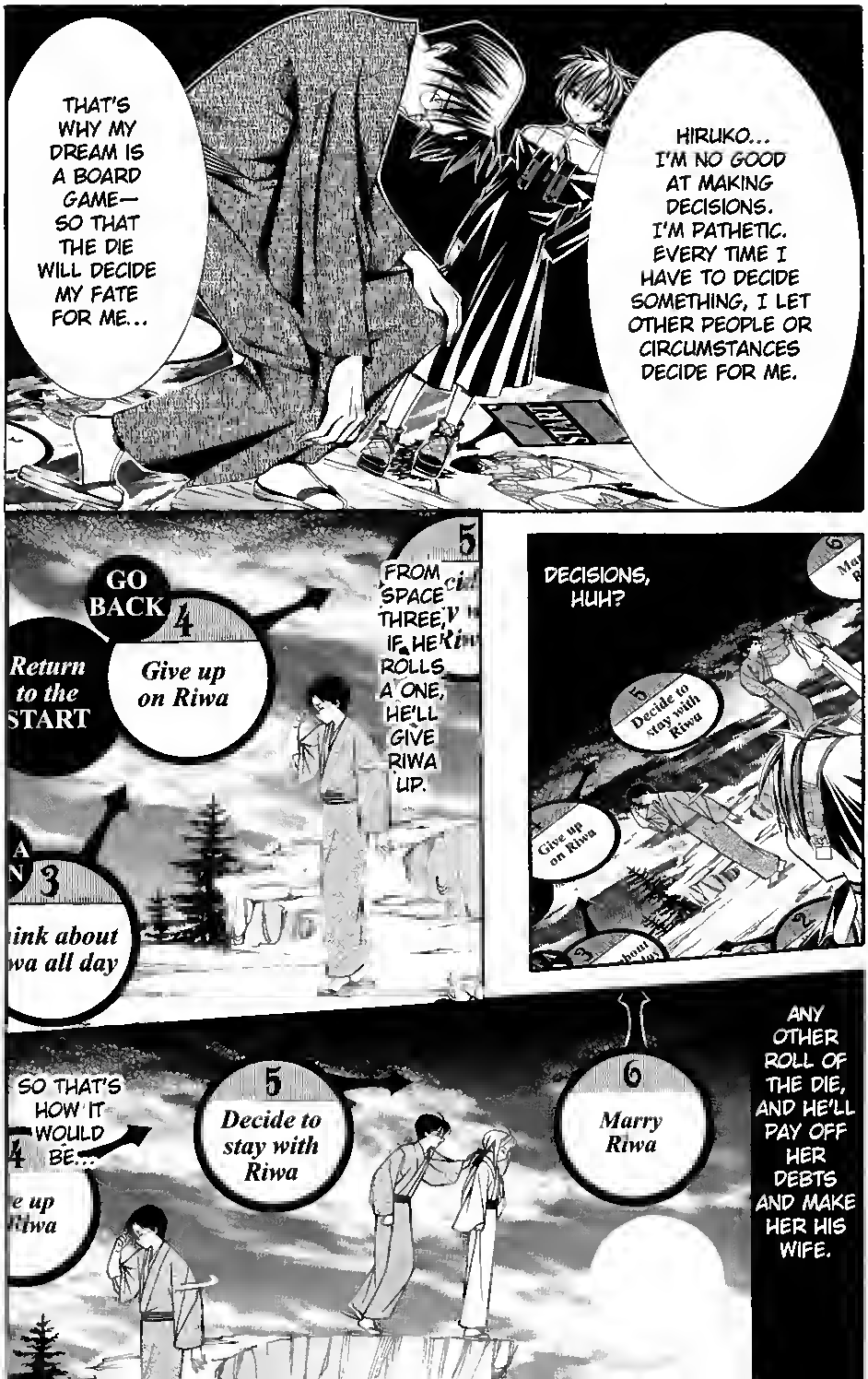
Fall in with Ri first s

SOB

TO SAVE THE GIRL I HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO PAY OFF HER DEBTS.

ROLL

BUT I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY...


THAT'S WHY MY DREAM IS A BOARD GAME— SO THAT THE DIE WILL DECIDE MY FATE FOR ME...
HIRUKO... I'M NO GOOD AT MAKING DECISIONS. I'M PATHETIC. EVERY TIME I HAVE TO DECIDE SOMETHING, I LET OTHER PEOPLE OR CIRCUMSTANCES DECIDE FOR ME.
GO BACK
Return to the START
4
Give up on Riwa
5
FROM SPACE THREE, IF HE ROLLS A ONE, HE'LL GIVE RIWA UP.
3
DECISIONS, HUH?
5
Decide to stay with Riwa
Give up on Riwa
SO THAT'S HOW IT WOULD BE...
5
Decide to stay with Riwa
6
Marry Riwa
ANY OTHER ROLL OF THE DIE, AND HE'LL PAY OFF HER DEBTS AND MAKE HER HIS WIFE.

BUT RIWA MIGHT COMMIT SUICIDE AT ANY TIME. SO, HIRUKO...
BUT YOU COULDN'T DECIDE FOR YOURSELF, SO YOU'VE BEEN DREAMING EVERY NIGHT ABOUT WHAT TO DO.
I WANT YOU TO ROLL THE DIE FOR ME!
I NEED TO ENTRUST THE DECISION TO YOU!
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, I'VE ONLY ROLLED ONES UP TO NOW.
!
DOES THAT DIE NOT ROLL HIGHER THAN A THREE?
THAT'S ODD.
YOU...
I THOUGHT SO.
HE'S NEVER GONE PAST SPACE THREE...
SKIP A TURN
3
Think about Riwa all day

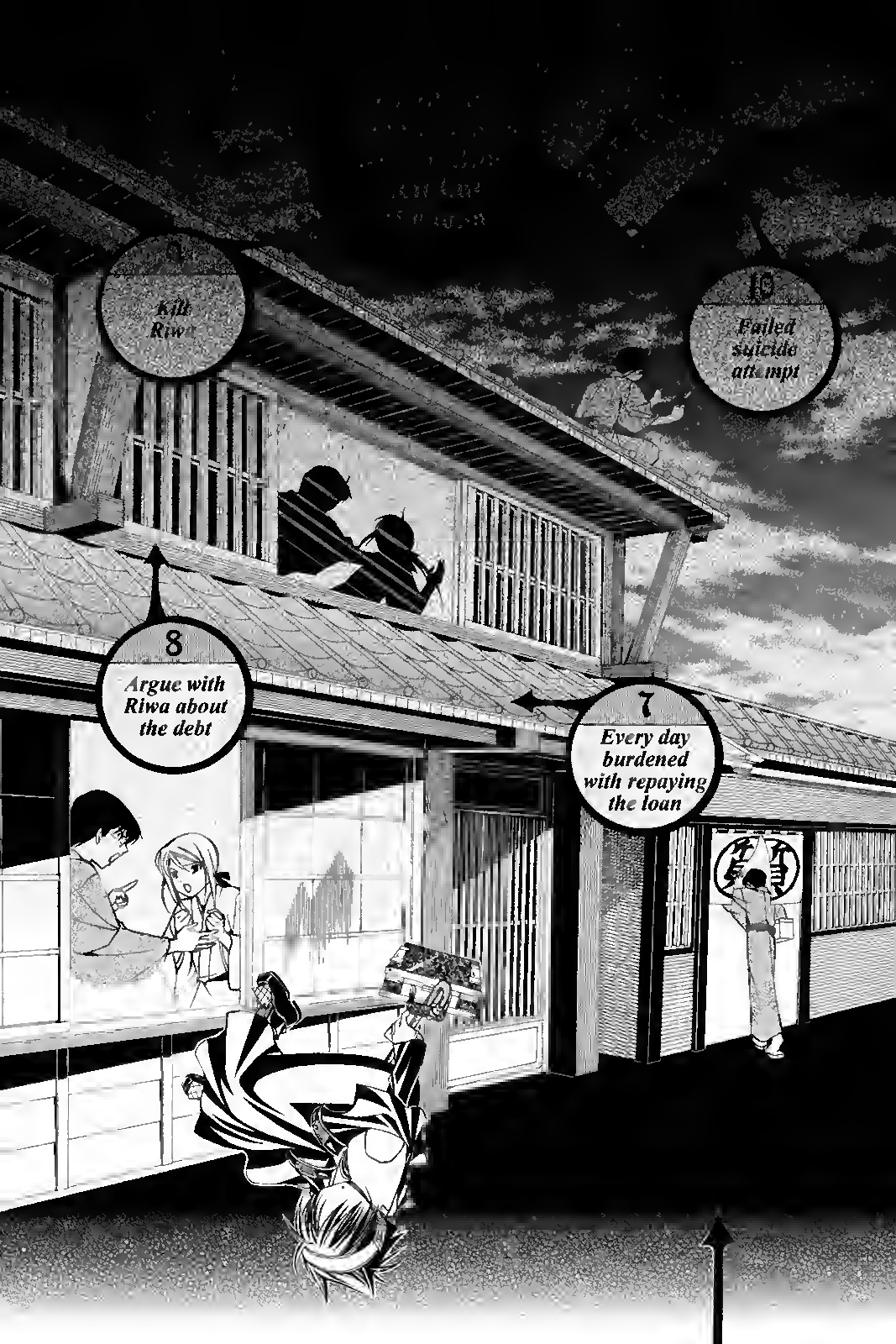
IN THAT CASE, IT WOULDN'T BE LEAVING THE DECISION TO "FATE"...
MAYBE YOU'VE BEEN SUBCONSCIOUSLY REFUSING TO MOVE PAST THREE...
PERHAPS THIS DIE IS BEING CONTROLLED BY YOUR TRUE FEELINGS.
6
Marry Riwa
1
START
MASAME, YOU'RE NOT AS INDECISIVE AS YOU SAY YOU ARE. ARE YOU?
NO... YOUR FEELINGS FOR RIWA...
THE PLACEMENT AND DRAWING OF THE START SPACE...

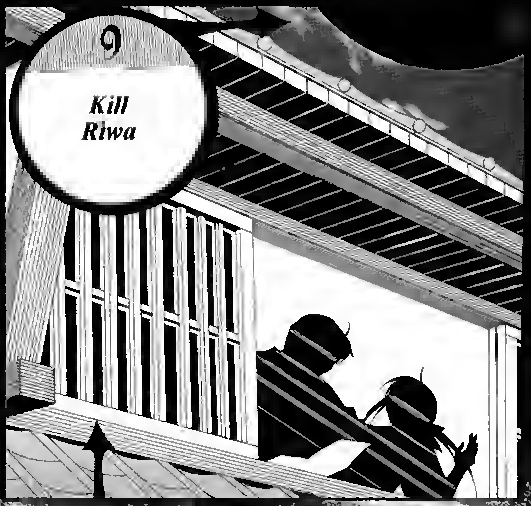
THAT ARROW ...
Marry Riwa

I REALLY DO CARE FOR RIWA, BUT I...
Marry Riwa
Fall in love with Riwa at first sight

WHAT DOES THE REST OF THE GAME SHOW...?
THAT'S RIGHT. THERE'S MORE OF THIS GAME...

HIRUKO, I CAN'T MOVE BECAUSE I'M THE PLAYING PIECE.
WILL YOU GO LOOK FOR ME?
Give up on Riwa
Fall in love with Riwa at first sight


Kill Riwa
10
Failed suicide attempt
8
Argue with Riwa about the debt
7
Every day burdened with repaying the loan



Spend the rest of your life in misery with nothing left but the loan

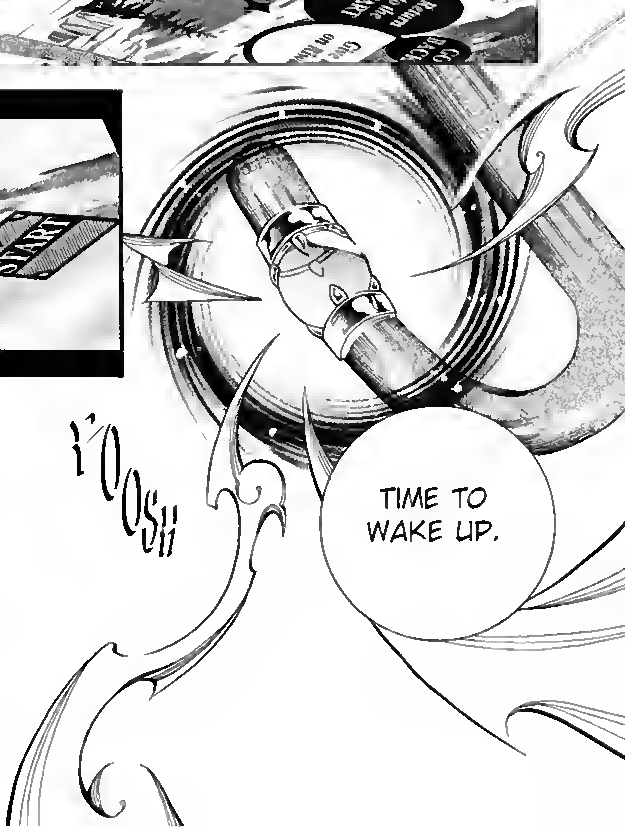
THA... THAT'S A TERRIBLE FUTURE!
THAT WAS WHY EVERYTHING AFTER SIX WAS IN DARKNESS...
2 Fall in love with Riwa @ first sight
IT'S JUST YOUR OWN ANXIETIES TAKING FORM IN THE DREAM.
YOUR REAL LIFE CAN HOLD A DIFFERENT DESTINY DEPENDING ON WHAT DECISION YOU MAKE.
BUT I CAN'T MAKE DECISIONS! SO THAT WILL BE MY FUTURE!
AHH... BUT RIWA!
I CAN'T DO NOTHING AND GIVE YOU UP EITHER...
THUNK
THEN LET THE ROLL OF THE DIE DECIDE.

I'M SCARED OF THE OUT-COME...
THE DIE WILL BE CONTROLLED BY MY OWN CONSCIENCE.
SO I WANT YOU TO ROLL IT FOR ME.
Fall in love with Riwa at first sight
Think about Riwa all day
Return to the START
RIWA IS ALWAYS THERE IN THE EVENING.
IF IT'S ANYTHING ELSE, I WILL TAKE HER HAND AND WE'LL WALK THAT ROAD OF HARDSHIP TOGETHER ...
IF IT'S A ONE, THEN I'LL SAY GOOD-BYE TO HER AT THE CLIFF ...
5 Decide to stay with Riwa
GO BACK
Return to the START
Give up on Riwa
1
IF A URN
3
Think about Riwa all day

KNOWING THAT THE FUTURE IS SO BLEAK, YOU'VE DECIDED TO FOLLOW WHATEVER THE DIE SHOWS.
HEH
BUT YOU HAVE DECIDED
TOSS
AH! HOW NONCHALANT OF YOU!
THIS. . . IS MY DESTINY.
ROLL...
ROLL
ROLL

I'LL STICK TO IT.

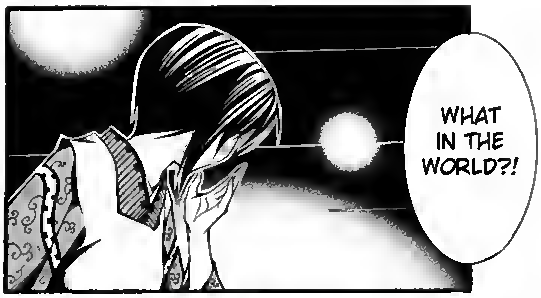
Marry Riwa


TIME TO WAKE UP.

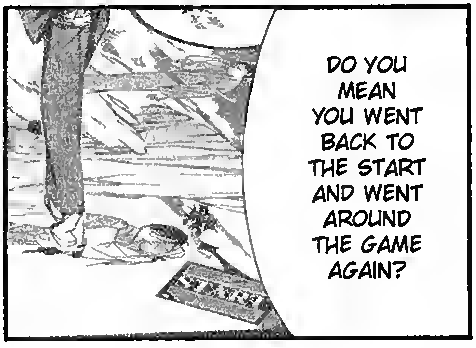
...IS THE ROAD I AM TO FOLLOW.
THIS ...
I'll give up on Riwa and return to the start.
Think about it all day.
SKIP 3 TURN
Return to the START
GO BACK 4
Give up on Riwa

I DON'T HAVE THE MEANS TO SUPPORT HER,
SO NOTHING CAN BE DONE ANYWAY...

NO!
NO...
I CAN'T ...!
I CAN'T LET YOU DIE!
RSLL
RSLL
RSLL
THUD



A FEW DAYS LATER...

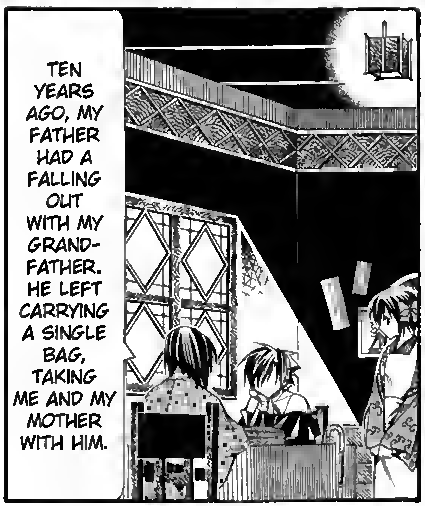


BUT AS YOU SEE...
IF I HAD FOLLOWED WHAT THE DIE HAD DECIDED FOR ME, I WOULD HAVE WATCHED HER DIE...
THE TREES ON THE SIDE OF THE CLIFF BROKE MY FALL...
SO NOW I WANT TO SUPPORT HIM..
HE COULD HAVE DONE NOTHING. BUT INSTEAD HE RISKED HIS LIFE TO CATCH ME.
OH MY...
SO WHATEVER THE ROLL OF THE DIE WAS, THE RESULT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SAME.
YOU WERE GOING TO BE TOGETHER.

IF HE'S CHOSEN RIWA, HE WON'T BE ABLE TO AVOID HARDSHIP.
BUT...
SINCE HE CARES FOR HER SO MUCH...
...I'M SURE THEY CAN OVER-COME THEIR HARD-SHIPS ...
GOING BACK TO THE START PLACED YOU BELOW RIWA. THE PICTURE HAD BOTH OF YOU THERE TOGETHER.
MASAME HAD ALREADY MADE HIS DECISION WITHOUT KNOWING IT.
START
BUT HE THOUGHT HE DIDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO ACCEPT IT.
SO HE HAD BEEN WALKING AROUND THE BOARD MEANING-LESSLY.
START

The Forty-Fourth Night: Words

SEEKING SOLACE
UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE
銀星館
喫茶
IS THIS WHERE I CAN FIND THE BAKU HIRUKO?


TEN YEARS AGO, MY FATHER HAD A FALLING OUT WITH MY GRAND-FATHER. HE LEFT CARRYING A SINGLE BAG, TAKING ME AND MY MOTHER WITH HIM.

OH MY...
SO WHAT IS YOUR NIGHTMARE?
ACTUALLY, IT'S ABOUT SOMETHING MY FATHER SAID TO ME.
WHEN THIS NEWS REACHED MY FATHER'S FAMILY, MY UNCLE SENT A LETTER SAYING THAT HE WOULD TAKE ME IN. SO TOMORROW I'LL GO...
BUT MY MOTHER DIED SOON AFTER, AND A FEW DAYS AGO MY FATHER ALSO PASSED ON...
MAYBE IT WAS A LULLABY... OR PERHAPS A STORY WITH NO MEANING...
SINCE I WAS YOUNG, MY FATHER WOULD OFTEN WHISPER THESE STRANGE WORDS TO ME.
AND I STARTED HAVING THIS DREAM WHERE THE WORDS TAKE FORM.
BUT WITH MY FATHER DEAD, I HAVE NO WAY OF FINDING OUT THE TRUE MEANING OF THOSE WORDS.
CACHE

I'D LIKE YOU TO HELP ME FIND OUT IF THERE IS ANY MEANING TO THESE WORDS.
HOW BOTHER-SOME, BUT I'LL DO IT.
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.
KOOSH

MAKE THE DRAGONFLY'S EYES SPIN
ENTER THE BAMBOO FOREST
SINK THE SUN IN THE WATER
THE FISH LOOKS UP AT THE SKY
THE FROG IS WAITING TO MOVE.

HAVE YOUR PARTNER GO IN
TAKE A LOOK AROUND AND PUSH THE CIRCLE DOWN
RETURN AND CHASE THE DRAGONFLY.

AS IN A TRICK QUESTION?
NO, I MEAN WHAT YOU'RE DOING...
CLACK
OH, I'M TRYING TO MAKE THE DRAGONFLY'S EYES DIZZY, LIKE IN THE FIRST LINE.
ISN'T IT WEIRD?
IT STARTS WITH A DRAGONFLY AND ENDS WITH A DRAGON-FLY...
ARE YOU SURE IT'S A REPETITION...?
"MAKE THE DRAGONFLY'S EYES SPIN."
*IN JAPAN TO CATCH A DRAGONFLY YOU TWIRL YOUR FINGER IN FRONT OF ITS EYES, HYPNOTIZING IT SO IT CAN'T MOVE AWAY
OR ELSE I WON'T BE ABLE TO MOVE ON.
THERE IS NOTHING ELSE HERE. SO THE ONLY THING TO DO IS TO FOLLOW THE FIRST LINE.

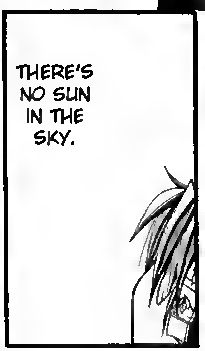
WHY DON'T WE DO THIS?
AGH!!
BUT, NOTHING'S HAPPENING ...
YES, I KNOW... I'VE BEEN DOING THIS EVERY NIGHT WITH NO SUCCESS.
SO NAIVE.
YOU KNOW, SINCE THIS DRAGONFLY IS PRETTY BIG...
THAT PROVES THAT WE WERE CORRECT.
SEE. THE WOODS HAVE APPEARED. WE CAN GO ON TO THE NEXT LINE.

I FEEL THAT I'VE SEEN THAT SOMEWHERE BEFORE...
YOU KNOW ...
PERHAPS THE TRUTH IS IN MY MEMORY, AND IT WILL BECOME CLEAR TO ME...
I DON'T TOTALLY UNDERSTAND, BUT IT SEEMS IF WE FOLLOW THE VERSE PROPERLY...
...THEN I THINK WE'LL UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE WORDS.

"ENTER THE BAMBOO FOREST. SINK THE SUN IN THE WATER."

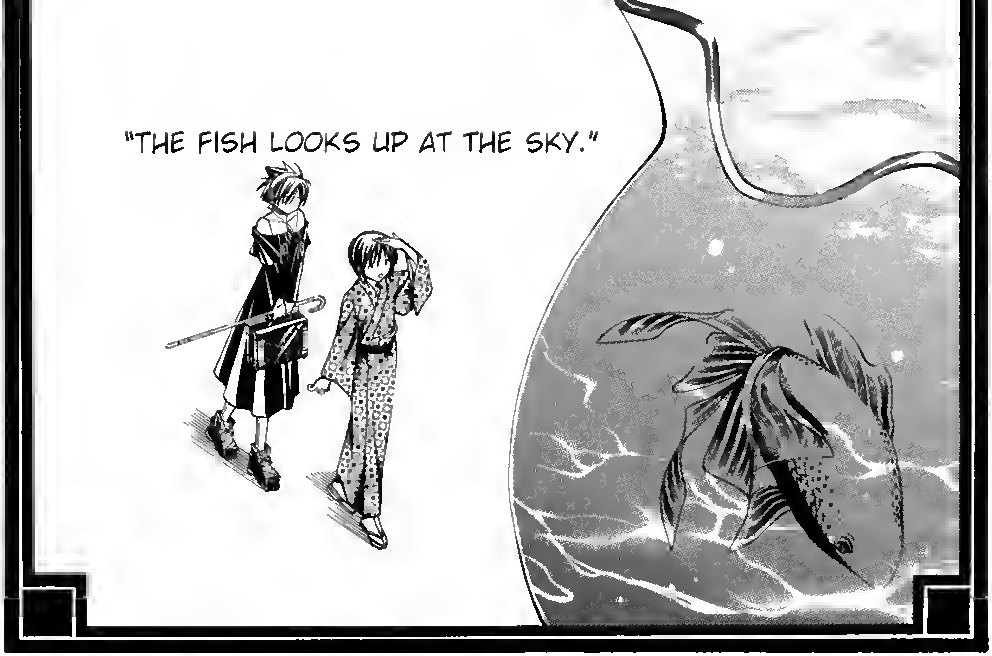
PLOP
...
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE. YOU CAN'T SUBMERGE THE REFLECTION OF THE SUN.

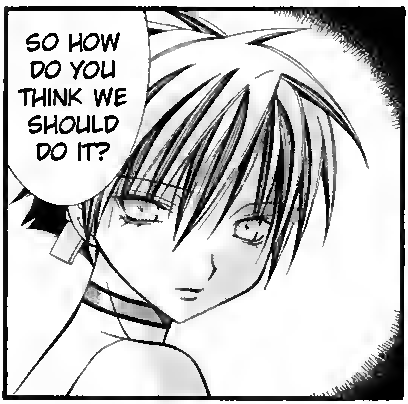
WHICH MEANS, IT, ONLY, EXISTS IN THE WATER.
DUH

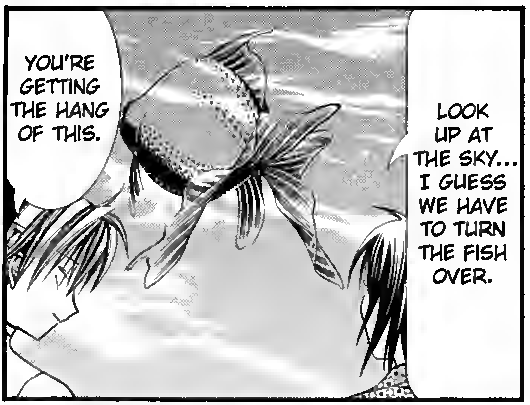

THERE'S NO SUN IN THE SKY.

HMM.

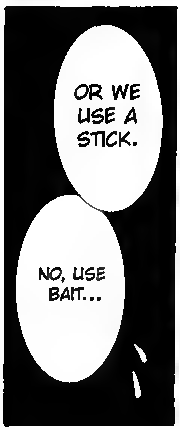
ZSSHH
SOUTH
GRIP
SO THAT'S IT...
NORTH
WEST
EAST
SOUTH
I SEE! THE SUN RISES IN THE EAST AND SINKS IN THE WEST!
AND FROM THE SOUTH MARK WE KNOW TO MOVE IT TO THE LEFT FOR WEST.
MOVE IT...
AH, LET'S MOVE ON TO THE NEXT LINE.
I'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE TOO...


"THE FISH LOOKS UP AT THE SKY."


SO HOW DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO IT?

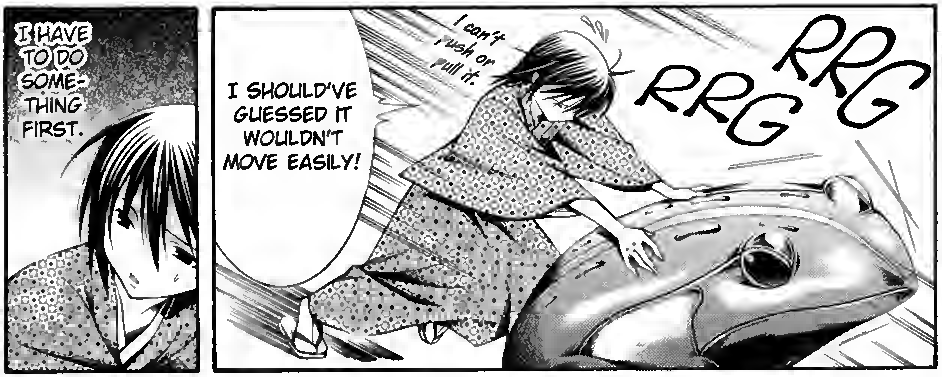

YOU'RE GETTING THE HANG OF THIS.
LOOK UP AT THE SKY... I GUESS WE HAVE TO TURN THE FISH OVER.

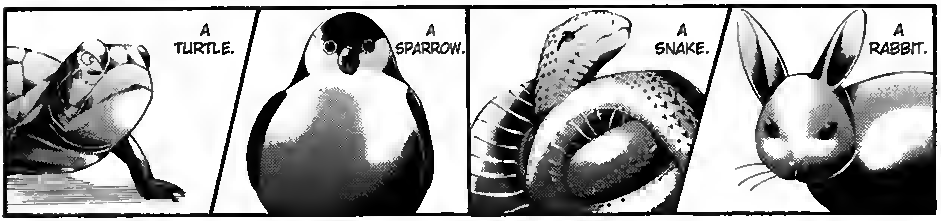
IT'S EASY.


OR WE USE A STICK.
NO, USE BAIT...

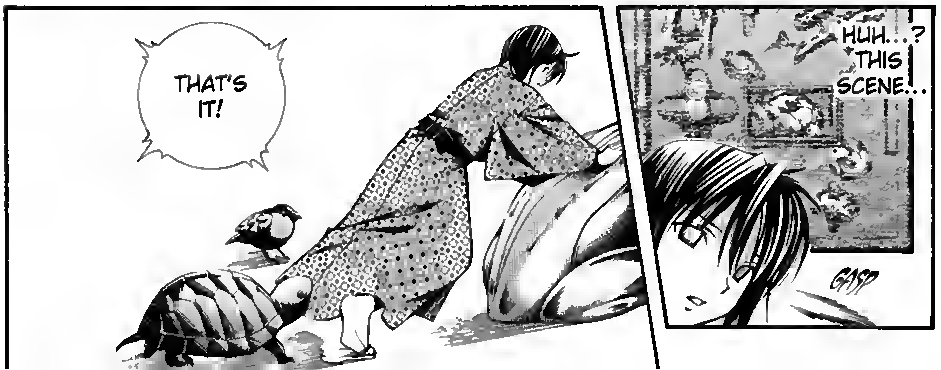
WE COULD HOLD IT AND...
NO, IT'LL STRUGGLE.

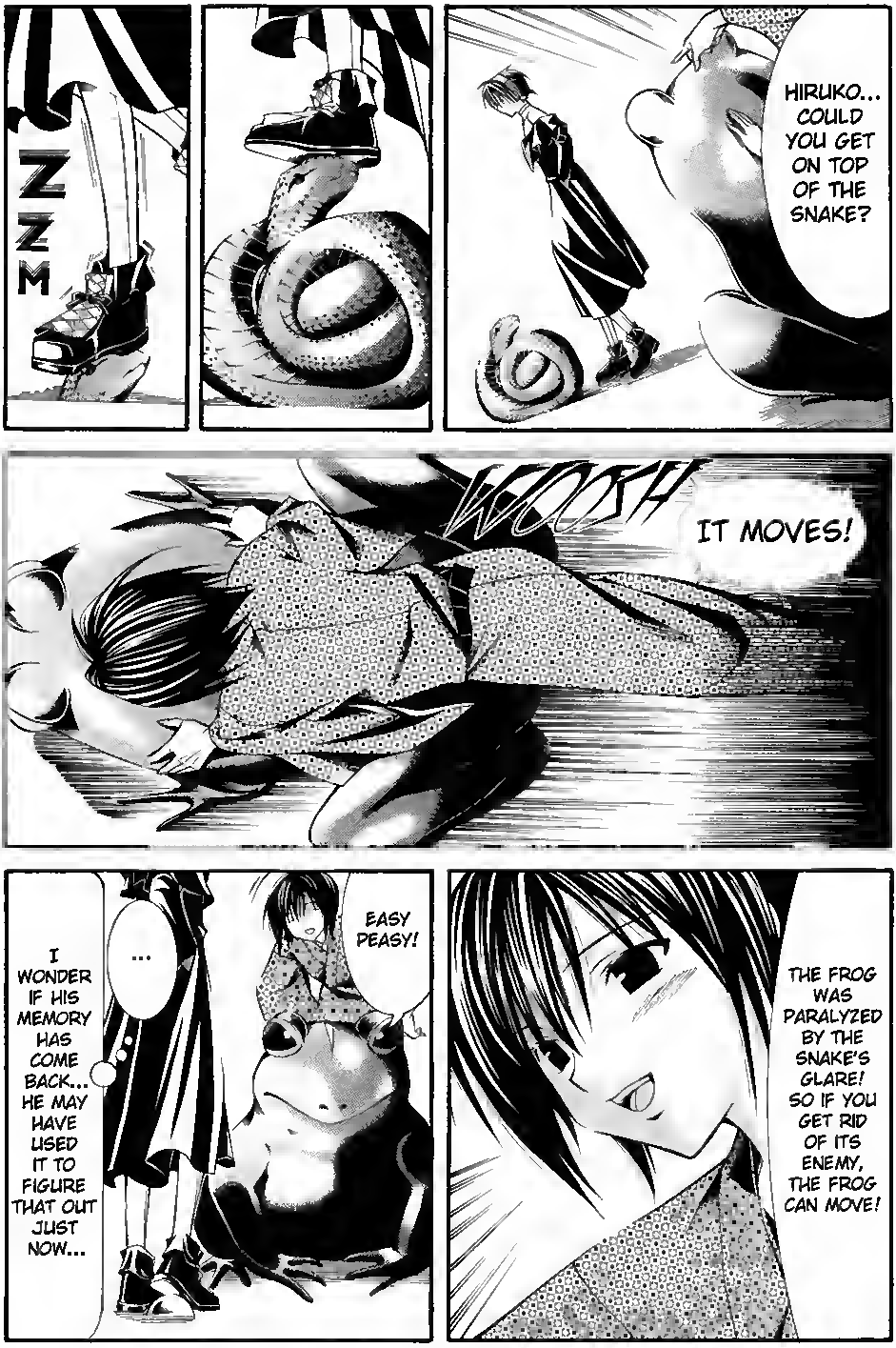
SPLASH
HE KILLED IT?
SPLASH
FLOAT
OH, IT WENT BELLY UP...
IT WENT UP.
THIS TOO ...
MY MEMORIES ARE GETTING CLEARER ...
AH, ON TO THE NEXT LINE.

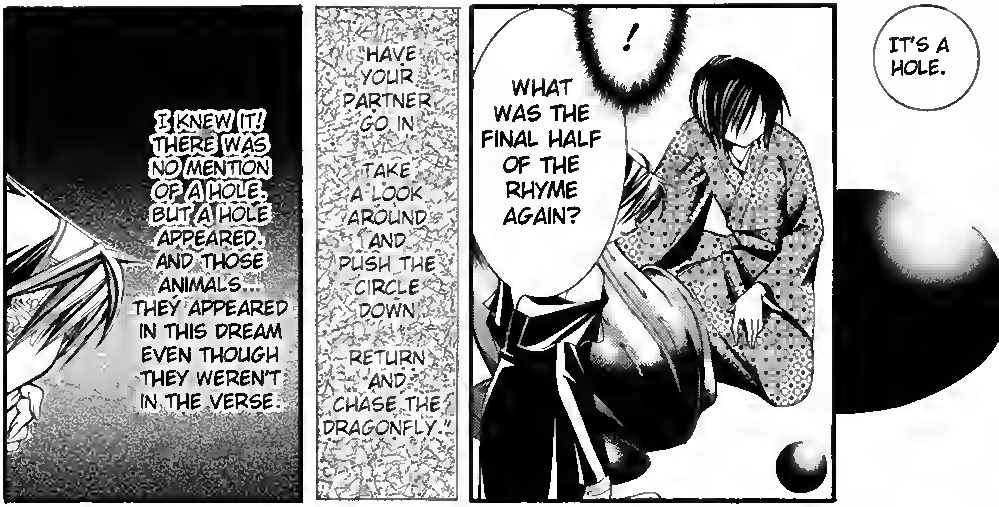




THEY'RE ALL FACING THIS WAY.




ZZM
HIRUKO... COULD YOU GET ON TOP OF THE SNAKE?
WOOSH
IT MOVES!
EASY PEASY!
...
I WONDER IF HIS MEMORY HAS COME BACK... HE MAY HAVE USED IT TO FIGURE THAT OUT JUST NOW...
THE FROG WAS PARALYZED BY THE SNAKE'S GLARE! SO IF YOU GET RID OF ITS ENEMY, THE FROG CAN MOVE!


I KNEW IT! THERE WAS NO MENTION OF A HOLE, BUT A HOLE APPEARED. AND THOSE ANIMALS... THEY APPEARED IN THIS DREAM EVEN THOUGH THEY WEREN'T IN THE VERSE.
"HAVE YOUR PARTNER GO IN
TAKE A LOOK AROUND
AND PUSH THE CIRCLE DOWN
RETURN AND CHASE THE DRAGONFLY."
!
WHAT WAS THE FINAL HALF OF THE RHYME AGAIN?
IT'S A HOLE.

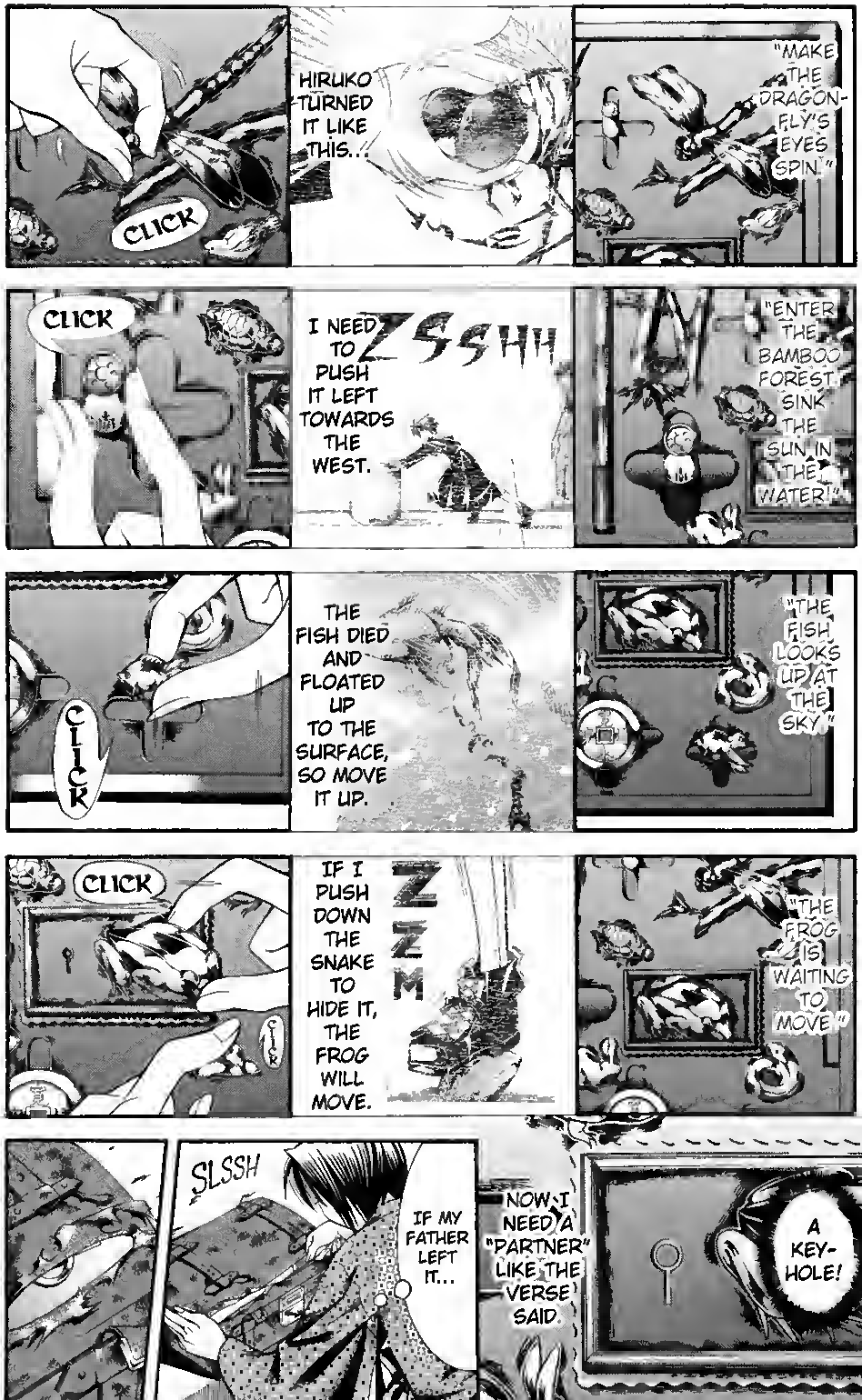
WHICH MEANS...

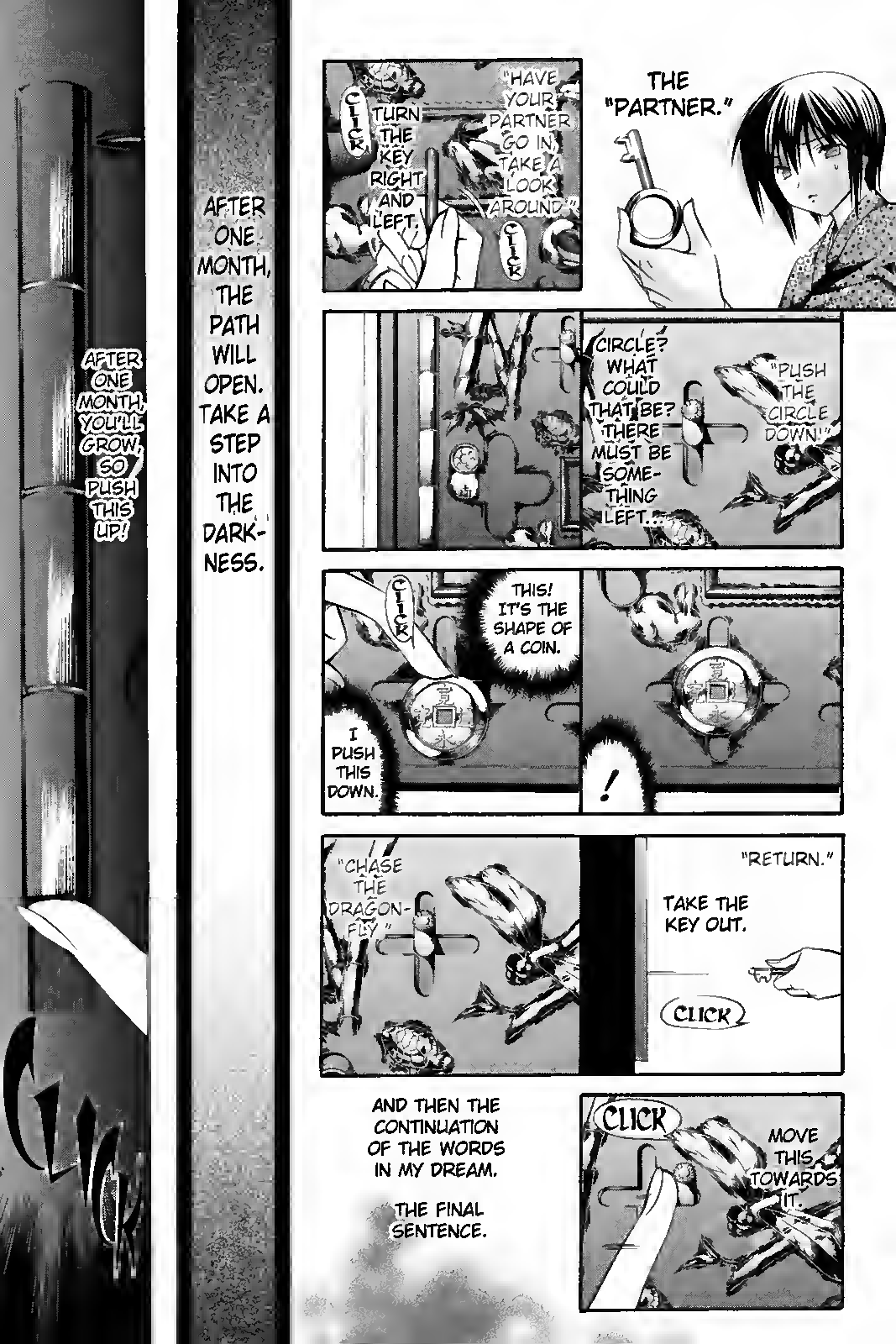
THE MEANING OF YOUR FATHER'S WORDS?
DO YOU UNDERSTAND NOW?
I REMEMBER SOMETHING ELSE TOO.
BECAUSE MY PARTNER ISN'T HERE.
YES... BUT EVEN IF I WANT TO GO FORWARD NOW...
I DON'T THINK I CAN.

THE VERSE DOESN'T GO BACK TO THE DRAGONFLY. THERE IS MORE TO IT...
WELL... IT'S NOTHING TO DO WITH ME NOW.
THERE'S MORE? THAT SCARED HIM...?
I WAS SCARED AND TRIED TO FORGET IT...
TIME TO WAKE UP.
OSH

IT'S BEEN TEN YEARS, HASN'T IT, SHINICHI?
NOW THAT YOUR GRAND-FATHER HAS PASSED ON, I'M ALL ALONE IN THIS HUGE MANSION. I'M SO GLAD YOU CAME BACK.
THIS ALL LOOKS KIND OF FAMILIAR...
THE ONLY THING THAT MY FATHER LEFT ME WAS THIS. BUT I THINK HE WOULD BE HAPPY TOO...
FATHER TOO...
THAT LOCK!
GRANDFATHER ...

THIS IS WHAT I WAS REMEMBERING IN MY DREAM!
THIS IS IT!
FAMILY HEIRLOOMS... TO ME?
INSIDE ARE THE FAMILY HEIRLOOMS. THEY ARE THE PASSED ON EACH GENERATION TO THE ELDEST SON. SO YOUR FATHER WOULD HAVE PASSED THE INFORMATION TO YOU.
OH, YOU REMEMBER THIS? IT'S A SPECIAL LOCK OUR ANCESTORS MADE. IF YOU DON'T MOVE EACH PART IN THE PROPER ORDER, THEN THE DOOR WON'T OPEN.
MAKE THE DRAGONFLY'S EYES SPIN. ENTER THE BAMBOO FOREST...
THE WORDS MY FATHER TOLD ME WERE ACTUALLY HOW TO UNLOCK THIS.


CLICK
HIRUKO TURNED IT LIKE THIS...
"MAKE THE DRAGONFLY'S EYES SPIN."
CLICK
I NEED TO PUSH IT LEFT TOWARDS THE WEST.
ZSSHH
"ENTER THE BAMBOO FOREST SINK THE SUN IN THE WATER!"
CLICK
THE FISH DIED AND FLOATED UP TO THE SURFACE, SO MOVE IT UP.
"THE FISH LOOKS UP AT THE SKY."
CLICK
IF I PUSH DOWN THE SNAKE TO HIDE IT, THE FROG WILL MOVE.
ZZM
"THE FROG IS WAITING TO MOVE."
SLSSH
IF MY FATHER LEFT IT...
NOW, I NEED A "PARTNER" LIKE THE VERSE SAID.
A KEY-HOLE!


AFTER ONE MONTH, YOU'LL GROW, SO PUSH THIS UP!
AFTER ONE MONTH, THE PATH WILL OPEN. TAKE A STEP INTO THE DARK-NESS.
CLICK
TURN THE KEY RIGHT AND LEFT.
"HAVE YOUR PARTNER GO IN, TAKE A LOOK AROUND."
CLICK
THE "PARTNER."
CIRCLE? WHAT COULD THAT BE? THERE MUST BE SOME-THING LEFT...
"PUSH THE CIRCLE DOWN."
CLICK
I PUSH THIS DOWN.
THIS! IT'S THE SHAPE OF A COIN.
!
"CHASE THE DRAGON-FLY."
"RETURN."
TAKE THE KEY OUT.
CLICK
AND THEN THE CONTINUATION OF THE WORDS IN MY DREAM.
THE FINAL SENTENCE.
CLICK
MOVE THIS TOWARDS IT.

FEAR
"TAKE A STEP INTO THE DARKNESS."
IT REALLY IS DARK... THIS MUST BE WHAT THE VERSE MEANT.
FI... FINALLY!
SHIVER
ALL OF THIS... IS MINE?
UN ... CLE ...?
MORE LIKE THIS, I THINK!
TH
NK

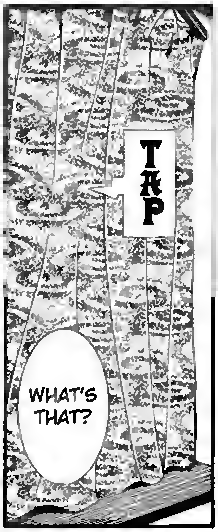
SWIP
DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG I'VE WAITED FOR THIS...
I'M GOING TO KEEP YOU IN THE DARKNESS.
I'LL LEAVE YOU IN HERE UNTIL YOU LOSE YOUR MIND...
THAT'S WHY HE TOOK ME IN... TO GET HIS HANDS ON THE KEY!
What What are you going to do with me?
BUT HOW COULD I STAND BY KNOWING ALL THIS WEALTH WAS IN HERE!
I TRIED TO WORK IT OUT MYSELF, BUT I STILL NEEDED THE KEY. IF I HAD BROKEN DOWN THE DOOR, THEN I WOULD HAVE BEEN DISGRACED IN FRONT OF MY FAMILY.
MY FATHER BELIEVED THAT HE WOULD BE RECONCILED WITH MY OLDER BROTHER, SO HE NEVER TOLD ME HOW TO OPEN IT. AND SINCE HE DIED SO SUDDENLY...
TAKE A STEP...
!
SHOVE
I'LL SAY THAT SINCE YOU WERE TOO YOUNG, YOU ENTRUSTED ME WITH THE WEALTH. AND I'LL BE FREE TO DO WITH IT AS I LIKE...

NO!
UGH...
CREAK
CREAK
I'M NOT GOING TO LOSE MY MIND!
I'LL KICK EVERYTHING IN HERE TO PIECES.
IF YOU CAN'T USE YOUR LEGS...
THEN WE'LL NEED AN ACCIDENT.
CLATTER

WAAAAH!!
CLATCH

"TAKE A STEP INTO THE DARKNESS."
BUT UNCLE, I DON'T HATE YOU... WHO WOULDN'T DO THE SAME, IN FRONT OF SUCH WEALTH...?
HEH... HE'S OUT COLD.
NSH
IT'S ONLY NATURAL TO HAVE ANOTHER TRICK INSIDE.
NSH
WITH A LOCK SO DIFFICULT TO CRACK...
YOUR HEART BECAME CLOUDED...
IN FRONT OF SUCH RICHES...
YES... I'M THE SAME.
TAKE A STEP INTO THE DARKNESS.
...
MINE TOO...
THAT LAST SENTENCE WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT TO RESOLVE.

The Forty-Fifth Night: Narrow



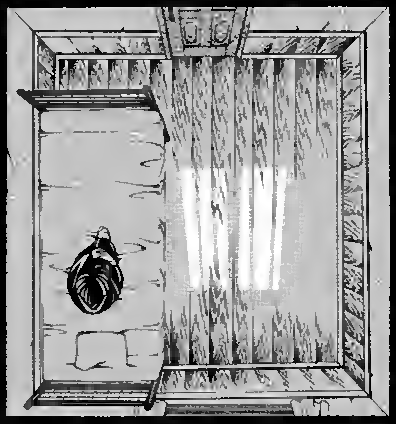
I'VE BEEN LOCKED IN THIS ROOM FOR YEARS...
THAT'S RIGHT.
I'VE WANTED TO MEET YOU FOR SO LONG... I HEARD PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT YOU WHEN WE MOVED HERE...
OUR NEIGHBOR?
I CAN'T...
WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST COME OVER?
P-PLEASE LET ME COME IN.
I CAN'T COPE WITH THIS NIGHTMARE ANYMORE...
NIGHT-MARE?
SHH!
YEARS?!
IT SOUNDS COMPLICATED.
OKAY. BE CAREFUL NOW.

IT'S A BIT STRANGE, RIGHT?
Yeah, I don't use that window and I'm usually asleep.
Is this the first time you've seen her?
SURE, IF YOU TELL ME WHY.
UM, CAN YOU SHOW ME MORE OF THIS PLACE? I WANT TO SEE AS MANY ROOMS AS POSSIBLE.
FINALLY, I...
I'M NOT SURE...
BUT I CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF IT.
I WAS SO EXCITED ABOUT STARTING MY NEW LIFE, EXCEPT...
MY MOTHER CHANGED A LOT WHEN SHE REMARRIED.
MY MOTHER
HIFUMI'S
YOU SAID THAT YOU'D BEEN LOCKED IN THAT ROOM. WHO DID THAT TO YOU AND WHY?

JUST LOOKING AT YOU MAKES ME ANGRY!
YOU ARE NEVER TO LEAVE THIS ROOM EVER AGAIN!
YOUR PRESENCE REMINDS ME OF YOUR FATHER!
I WANT TO BE RID OF THAT WRETCHED, PAINFUL PAST.
SLAM
IF YOU DARE STEP OUTSIDE THIS ROOM, I'LL BEAT YOU!
MOTHER WOULD CONSTANTLY YELL AT ME FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR..
I WAS TOO SCARED TO EVEN RUN AWAY...!
AND YOUR FATHER?
EVEN THOUGH HE WASN'T MY BIOLOGICAL FATHER, HE WOULD TAKE CARE OF ME, BRINGING ME MY MEALS. I WAS MORE ATTACHED TO HIM THAN TO MY OWN MOTHER..
WHAT ABOUT THIS ROOM? IT'S LOCKED... CAN'T I GO IN?

I'VE BEEN LOCKED UP IN MY ROOM SINCE BEFORE I COULD READ OR WRITE. IT'S BEEN SUCH A LONG TIME THAT I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW LONG IT'S BEEN...

I KNOW NOTHING OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD ANYMORE... ALL I KNOW IS MY ROOM...



MY ENTIRE WORLD IS THAT ROOM.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

EVEN MY DREAMS, ALL I SEE IS THAT ROOM. NO MATTER WHETHER I'M ASLEEP OR AWAKE, IT'S ALWAYS THAT ROOM!
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY-MORE!
AND... AND NOW THE ROOM IN MY DREAM IS GETTING NARROWER ...!
THE WALLS ARE CLOSING IN AS IF THEY'RE GOING TO CRUSH ME!
IT'S A SIGN THAT YOUR SENSES HAVE STARTED TO SHUT DOWN.
I'M... I'M SO SCARED OF BEING CRUSHED AT ANY TIME.
SO IN MY DREAM, I WOULD TRY TO ESCAPE BY THE WINDOW OPPOSITE.
BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS INSIDE THE ROOM AND THE WINDOW WOULDN'T OPEN...
BUT NOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN INSIDE HIFUMI'S ROOM, YOUR WORLD IS NOW INTERTWINED WITH THIS ONE... NOW THAT YOU'VE BROADENED YOUR HORIZONS, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO OPEN THE WINDOW AND ESCAPE FROM YOUR ROOM.
YES, KNOWING THE BAKU WAS HERE GAVE ME THE ENCOURAGE-MENT TO CONTACT YOU.

FOOSH
BUT THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE IS ONLY ANOTHER CONFINED SPACE. ONCE YOU'VE BECOME FAMILIAR WITH IT, IT'LL START TO CLOSE IN ON YOU TOO.
WE NEED TO FIND A RESOLUTION...
PREFERABLY IN REALITY...
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

ZMM
ZMM
CALM DOWN. YOU CAN ESCAPE INTO HIFUMI'S ROOM NOW.
AHH! I'M SCARED, HIRUKO!
I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANY-MORE ...
SEE, THE WINDOW OPENS—
IYE!
GRAH

ZMM ZMM ZMM
I TOLD YOU NOT TO LEAVE THIS ROOM! AS PROMISED, I'M GOING TO BEAT YOU SO HARD!
?!
MOTHER ...?!
!
AH!
THUNK
IYE! WAIT!
I SAID WAIT!
IYE!
ZMM ZMM
ZMM ZMM
ZMM

I ALWAYS WAKE UP JUST BEFORE THE ROOM CLOSES IN COMPLETELY!
AND MY MOTHER HAD NEVER APPEARED IN MY DREAM BEFORE... WHY?!
WH... WHY?
THAT'S ODD.
ODD?
NEVER?
DID HAVING A BAKU IN THIS DREAM DISRUPT IT SOMEHOW?
MO... MOTHER WAS CRUSHED.
INSTEAD OF ME...
OR PERHAPS SHE'S CHANGED SINCE HER WORLD NOW INCLUDES THE SILVER STAR..
?!
ANYWAY... YOU SHOULD BE SAFE HERE.
AT LEAST, UNTIL YOU GET FAMILIAR WITH THIS ROOM...

ZMM
THE WALLS!
WHY IS IT CLOSING IN HERE TOO?!
SMASH
ZMMZMM
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! IT'S TOO DANGER-OUS.
IT'S OPEN.
CLACK
IT'S CLOSED IN.
I... I'M GLAD I HAD SEEN THE OTHER ROOMS IN THE REAL WORLD TOO.

THAT LOCKED DOOR LOOKS DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE I SAW.
NO, JUST BECAUSE YOU HAD SEEN THE OTHER ROOMS DOESN'T MEAN IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN... IF SO, THEN THIS CORRIDOR TOO WILL...
OH!
IS THERE SOMETHING HERE THAT'S CAUSING THIS...?
"BEHIND THAT DOOR SLEEPS A PAST THAT MIZUKI DOESN'T WANT TO REMEMBER."
!
PERHAPS THERE IS SOMETHING BEHIND THIS DOOR THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER TOO?
THE LOCKED DOOR YOU SAW AT THE SILVER STAR HAS OVERLAPPED WITH THE LOCKED DOOR IN YOUR HOUSE IN THIS DREAM.
I KNOW THIS DOOR ...
IT'S IN MY HOUSE, ON THE FIRST FLOOR...
THE PAST ...
IT WAS THIS DOOR, THEN.

ZMM
!!
ZMM ZMM ZMM
AS I SUSPECTED... THERE'S SOMETHING BEHIND THIS DOOR FROM YOUR PAST THAT'S CAUSING THIS NIGHTMARE.
SO OPEN THE DOOR NOW AND FACE IT. PERHAPS IT WILL STOP THIS NIGHTMARE.
ZMM ZMM ZMM
THERE'S NO-WHERE LEFT TO RUN.
DO YOU WANT US TO BE SQUASHED?
OR DO YOU...
UGH!
CLATCH

I'M SO SQUISHED IN HERE...
FORGIVE ME...
I WON'T LEAVE MY ROOM AGAIN...
PLEASE ...!
STOP!
HUT HUT
N-NO!!
EYE, THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU...
SHE BRICKED UP HER OWN DAUGHTER ...
I...
...

I WAS BLINDFOLDED AND BEING BRICKED INTO A WALL...
STOP.
PLEASE STOP...
I LEFT MY ROOM JUST ONCE AND WENT DOWNSTAIRS. I WAS PLANNING TO RUN AWAY...
BUT...
IF YOU DARE STEP OUTSIDE THIS ROOM, I'LL BEAT YOU!
I SEE...
I WAS SO SCARED... I LOST CONSCIOUSNESS...
WHEN I WOKE UP AGAIN, I WAS BACK IN MY ROOM...
I COULDN'T DO IT... I HAD TO GIVE UP.
MY MOTHER MUST HAVE SEEN ME BECAUSE ONE NIGHT I WOKE UP AND...
NOT ONLY DID HER MOTHER REJECT HER, BUT SHE EVEN TRIED TO KILL HER.
THAT, WITH HER FEAR OF THE WALL BRICKING HER IN, MADE HER HAVE THIS NIGHTMARE.

SHE... SHE HATES ME SO MUCH...
I DON'T CARE ANYMORE... ABOUT THIS NIGHTMARE... ABOUT ME...
WHATEVER HAPPENS...
MY MOTHER NEVER YELLED AT ME FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF MY DOOR AGAIN.
TO HER, I WAS ALREADY DEAD!
?!
IF YOU DON'T CARE, WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE?
YOU HAVE TO TAKE ACTION IN THE REAL WORLD. YOUR WORLD IS NOT JUST IN THAT ROOM.
SO WHY NOT FACE THE MUSIC? CONFRONT YOUR MOTHER AND GET BEATEN OR LEAVE THE HOUSE...
IF YOU GIVE UP, YOUR NIGHTMARE WON'T STOP AND YOUR MOTHER WON'T CHANGE.

IF I HAVE TO MAKE A CHANGE, I'D RATHER CONFRONT MY MOTHER..
BUT... NOTHING WILL CHANGE...
NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED.
TIME TO WAKE UP.

IYE JUST LEFT THROUGH MY ROOM TO HER OWN.
HEY, DO YOU THINK SHE'LL BE ABLE TO CONFRONT HER MOTHER?
I TOLD HER IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, SHE COULD COME BACK HERE.
WHAT IS IT?
HMM ...
IN HER MEMORY, THAT FACT THAT HER EYES WERE COVERED IS BOTHERING ME.
AND, THAT SINCE THAT DAY, HER MOTHER STOPPED YELLING AT HER..
HUH? IF HER EYES WERE COVERED AND THE PERSON BRICKING HER UP DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING, THEN HOW DID SHE KNOW WHO...
EXACTLY.
WHAT IF SHE ONLY "BELIEVES" THAT IT WAS HER MOTHER?
?!
YOU MEAN HER MEMORY IS PLAYING TRICKS ON HER DREAM?

I'M GOING OUT OF MY ROOM.
IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN SHE'S TRYING TO HIDE FROM THE REAL MEMORY.
AND IF THE DREAM ACTUALLY HAS ANOTHER MEANING...
MO... MOTHER WAS CRUSHED.
I'M GOING TO CONFRONT MY MOTHER.
PERHAPS IT WAS A PREDICTION... OF THE FUTURE...
THE WALLS...
WHY IS IT CLOSING IN HERE TOO?!
CLATCH
CLATCH

OH, IYE... YOU SHOULDN'T BE OUT OF YOUR ROOM...
AND YOUR MOTHER TRIED SO HARD TO STOP YOU...
FA... FATHER, WHAT IS THIS?
WHERE IS MOTHER ...?
JUST AS WELL. I WAS JUST ABOUT TO COME AND GET YOU.
HA HA. SHE'S RIGHT HERE.
SHE'S ALL MINE NOW.

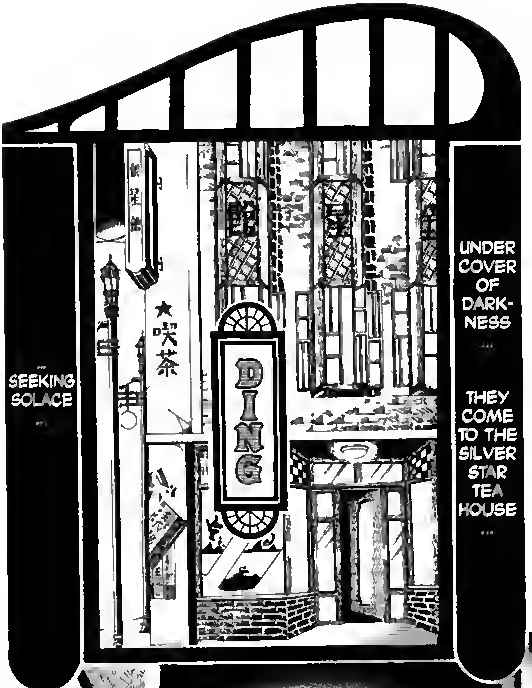
SHE WAS AFRAID THAT I'D BE JEALOUS OF YOU IF SHE CARED FOR YOU. SO SHE WAS DELIBERATELY CRUEL TO YOU.
IT WAS ALL AN ACT.
!
OF COURSE I FIGURED IT OUT. IT MEANS SHE STILL CARED FOR YOUR FATHER.
SO THAT NIGHT, I BRICKED YOU UP... TO CUT HER OFF FROM ALL TIES WITH HIM.
"STOP!"
"PLEASE, STOP!!"
BUT YOUR CRIES ALERTED HER.
HMM? ARE YOU SAYING SHE DIDN'T LOVE HIM ANYMORE?
AND SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO YOUR FATHER.
...AS IF I COULD BELIEVE THAT.
SHE PROTECTED YOU WITH HER LIFE AFTER ALL.

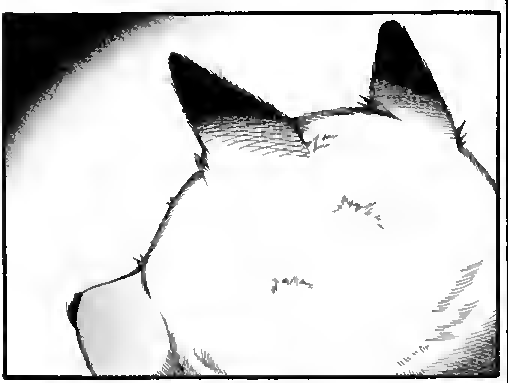
WH... WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO IYE—?!
STOP IT! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU!
SOMETHING WRONG... WITH ME? I JUST LOVE YOU
THEN WHY DON'T YOU BELIEVE ME?!
WHEN WILL YOU START TRUSTING ME?!
WHAT CAN I DO—
WHAT CAN YOU DO? THEN...
GASP
BECOME MINE...
IF I MAKE IT SO YOU CAN NEVER LEAVE

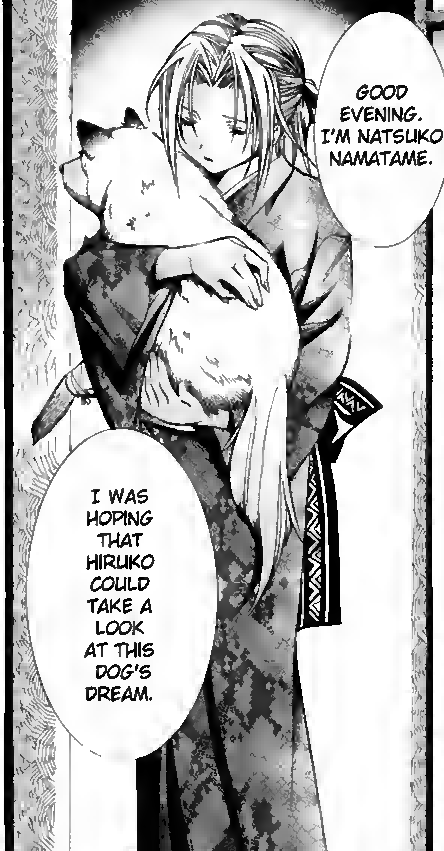
MY MOTHER... LOVES ME...
SO INSTEAD OF ME, SHE...
THUNK
NOW THERE'S NO ONE LEFT TO PROTECT YOU...
...
THAT NIGHT YOU LOOKED SO FRIGHTENED TOO. YOU FAINTED OUT OF FEAR, DIDN'T YOU?
LUCKILY, YOUR MEMORY WARPED.
SO THAT YOU COULD COPE WITH THE FEAR, YOU CONFUSED ME WITH YOUR MOTHER.
I TRIED MY BEST TO LOVE YOU... BUT I JUST COULDN'T.
SO AS I FIRST PLANNED, YOU TOO WILL...
...
BUT ...
IF I LOSE YOU TOO, THEN WHAT WILL I LIVE FOR...?
HOW WILL I GO ON, HAVING TO LIVE HERE ALL BY MYSELF...?!

A FEW DAYS LATER...
OH, YOU'RE UP EARLY, HIFUMI.
OH, I WAS WORRIED ABOUT IYE. I THOUGHT THAT I MIGHT GO AND SPEAK WITH HER PARENTS...
THERE'S NO NEED.
I WAS CONCERNED TOO, SO I JUST WENT TO TAKE A LOOK.
BUT NO ONE WAS THERE.
AND ALL THEIR THINGS WERE GONE TOO.
THEY MOVED OUT?!
YES, I SAW A SHADOW IN THE MORNING MIST OF SOMEONE PULLING A CART. BUT...
EVEN THOUGH THREE PEOPLE LIVED THERE...
I ONLY SAW ONE PERSON LEAVE.
WHO WAS THAT...
ONE THING I CAN SAY IS...
THERE'S NO ONE NEXT DOOR NOW...

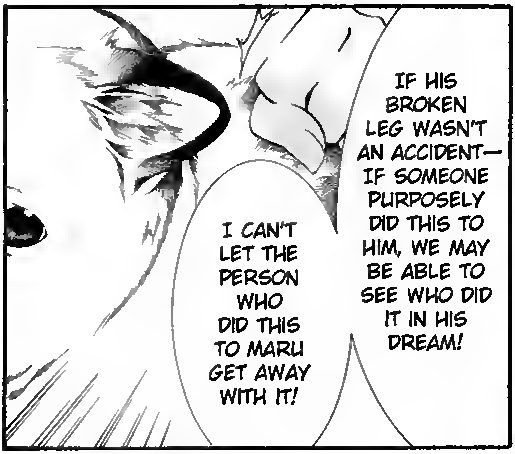
The Forty-Sixth Night: The Dog

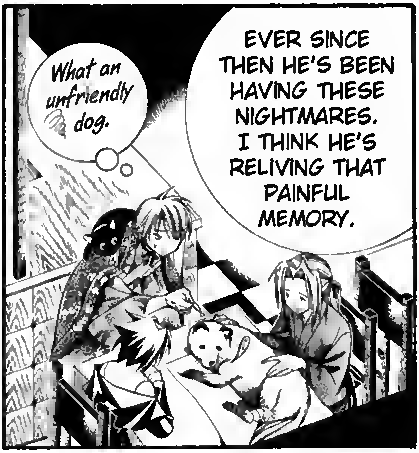


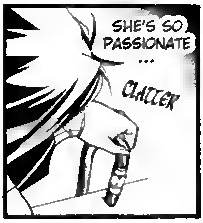




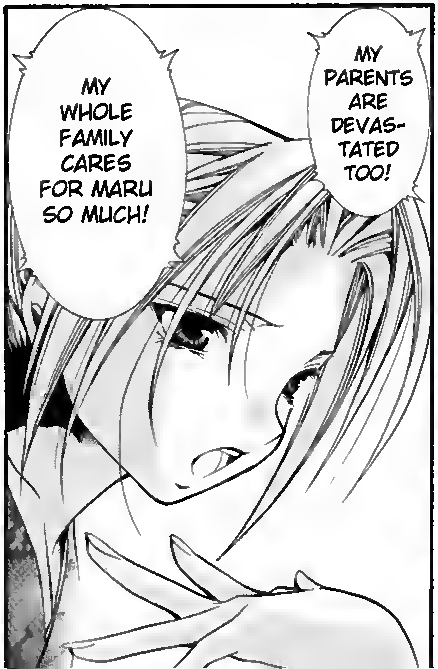
MARU IS A STRAY DOG, BUT HE COMES AROUND TO OUR HOUSE OFTEN.
BUT A FEW DAYS AGO WE FOUND HIM IN OUR GARDEN WITH A BROKEN LEG...


IF HIS BROKEN LEG WASN'T AN ACCIDENT— IF SOMEONE PURPOSELY DID THIS TO HIM, WE MAY BE ABLE TO SEE WHO DID IT IN HIS DREAM!
I CAN'T LET THE PERSON WHO DID THIS TO MARU GET AWAY WITH IT!


EVER SINCE THEN HE'S BEEN HAVING THESE NIGHTMARES. I THINK HE'S RELIVING THAT PAINFUL MEMORY.
What an unfriendly dog.


SHE'S SO PASSIONATE ...
CLICK

FINE. BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO ACCOMPANY ME.


MY WHOLE FAMILY CARES FOR MARU SO MUCH!
MY PARENTS ARE DEVAS-TATED TOO!

HMPH. WHY SHOULD I GO INTO AN ANIMAL'S DREAM?
PLEASE!

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

OH, IT'S OUR GARDEN.
AND THAT'S MY GRAND-FATHER!
HE DIED A YEAR AGO OF A STROKE...
THEN THIS MUST BE A SCENE FROM BEFORE HIS DEATH.

THIS WAS MY GRANDFATHER'S FAVORITE CAMELLIA TREE. THERE WAS A HOLE IN THE FENCE UNDERNEATH IT WHERE MARU WOULD COME IN THROUGH.
MARU... ARE YOU THERE, MARU?
MY GRAND-FATHER WAS A BIT DIFFICULT TOO, SO I GUESS THAT'S WHY THEY GOT ALONG.
HE'S NOT A VERY FRIENDLY DOG, BUT HE LOVED MY GRAND-FATHER.
WE'VE WATCHED THE FLOWERS BLOOM ON THAT TREE SO MANY TIMES TOGETHER...
MARU... I WONDER HOW LONG IT'S BEEN SINCE YOU'VE BEEN COMING HERE.
HA HA... LOOKS LIKE WE'VE BEEN GROWING OLD TOGETHER TOO.

I WONDER IF I'LL SEE NEXT YEAR'S BLOOM.
PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER IF I DIDN'T.
HI... HIRUKO. I WASN'T BY MY GRANDFATHER'S SIDE WHEN HE PASSED AWAY. FATHER AND MOTHER TOO... WE WERE TOO BUSY WORKING TO PAY FOR HIS MEDICINE...
I STILL REGRET IT...!
I KNOW I'M A BURDEN ON MY FAMILY. THE COST OF MY MEDICINES, ON TOP OF THE CARE NEEDED FOR THIS OLD MAN, ARE MAKING MY FAMILY SUFFER..
GRAND-FATHER ...!
DON'T THINK THAT WAY...
HEY, MARU! YOU STUPID DOG!
THUNK
AH! THAT'S THE CHILD NEXT DOOR. HE SNEAKS INTO OUR GARDEN WHENEVER MARU'S HERE TO BULLY HIM!

IT HAS TO BE THEM!
CINK
C'mere and bark if you don't like it!
HE'S ANNOYED BECAUSE MARU ONLY LIKES GRAND-FATHER AND NOT HIM.
HIS MOTHER IS HORRIBLE TOO...
THEY MUST HAVE BROKEN MARU'S LEG!
?!
WHAT?! WHY'S IT GONE DARK?

I WAS THINKING THAT TOO...
THIS DREAM SEEMS TO BE A COLLECTION OF MARU'S MOST IMPORTANT MEMORIES.
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT.
OH! THE FLOWERS HAVE BLOOMED!
IT'S SPRING!
PLOP
PLOP
WOOSH

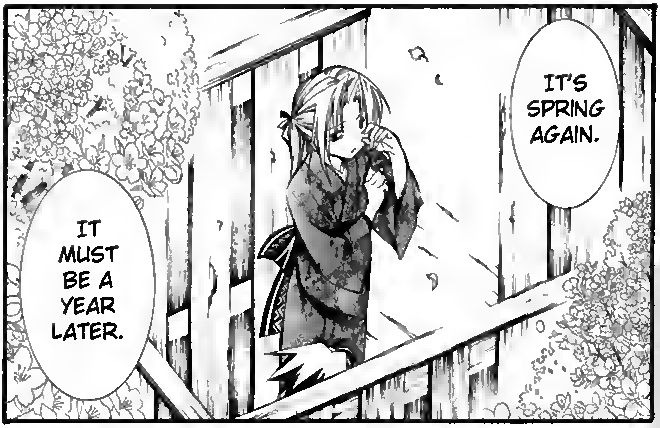
AII...
UGH...
OH! GRAND-FATHER?!
YOU SAID HE'D DIED OF A STROKE...
PERHAPS THIS IS WHEN...
AGH!
WOOF
MARU?!
WOOF
WOOF
MARU NEVER EVER BARKS!
WOOF WOOF
IS HE TRYING TO CALL FOR HELP?!

HELP ...!
IS... IS ANYONE HERE?!
OH NO! NONE OF US ARE AT HOME...
THAT'S WHY HE DIED A YEAR AGO LAST SPRING.
HELP ISN'T COMING.
...

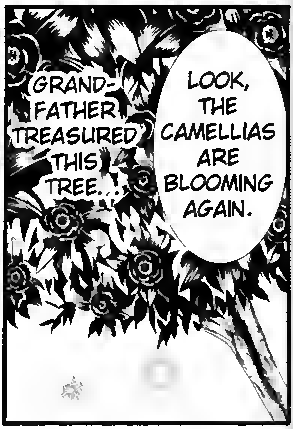
GRAND-FATHER!
!
CLATTER
LICK
LICK

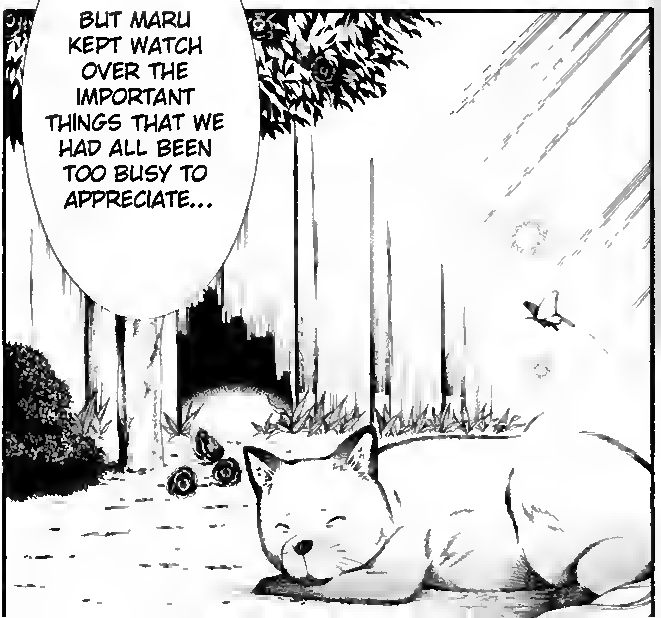
I'M... I'M SORRY, GRANDFATHER... THAT WE COULDN'T... THAT NO ONE WAS HERE WITH YOU AT THE END...
BUT... MARU, YOU WERE WITH HIM...
BECAUSE OF YOU, I WAS ABLE TO BE WITH MY GRANDFATHER ON HIS DEATHBED. EVEN IF IT WAS ONLY IN A DREAM...

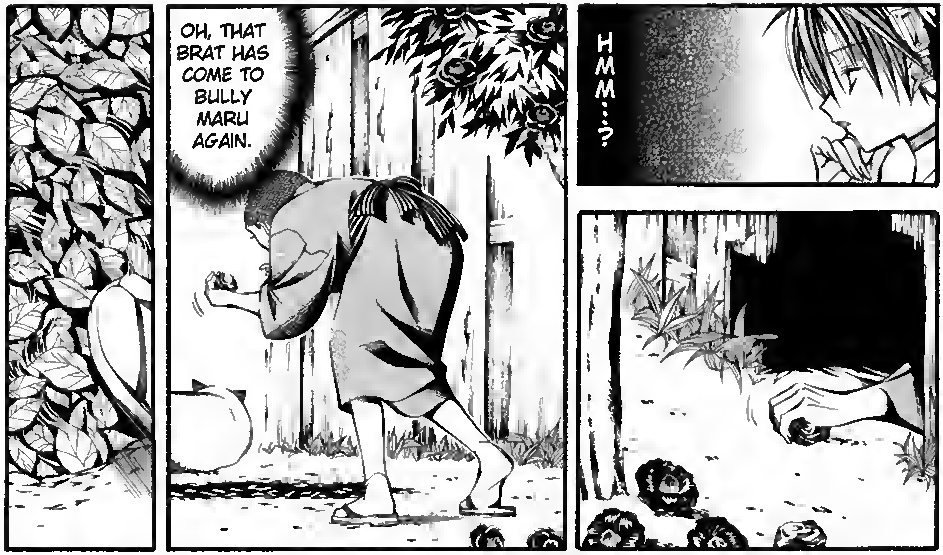
THANK YOU, MARU...

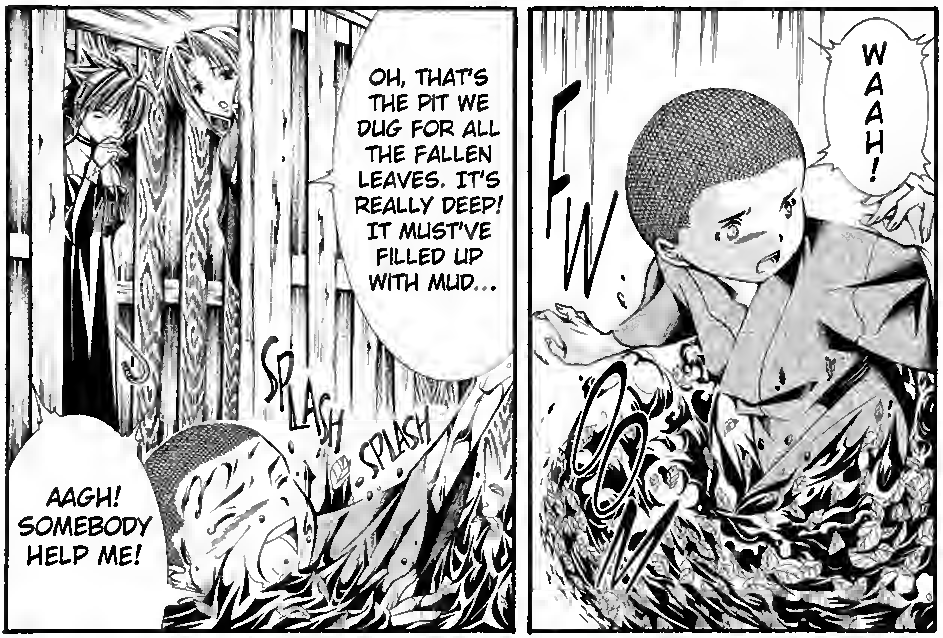

IT'S SPRING AGAIN.
IT MUST BE A YEAR LATER.

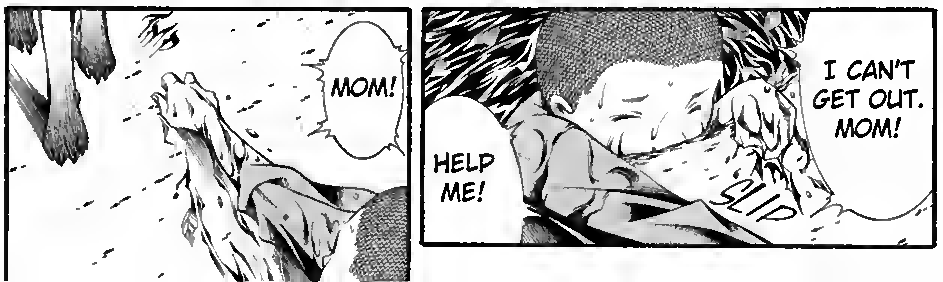
WE WERE SO BUSY WORKING TO MAKE MONEY THAT WE FORGOT ALL ABOUT IT...


LOOK, THE CAMELLIAS ARE BLOOMING AGAIN.
GRAND-FATHER TREASURED THIS TREE...


BUT MARU KEPT WATCH OVER THE IMPORTANT THINGS THAT WE HAD ALL BEEN TOO BUSY TO APPRECIATE...


OH, THAT BRAT HAS COME TO BULLY MARU AGAIN.
HMM...?

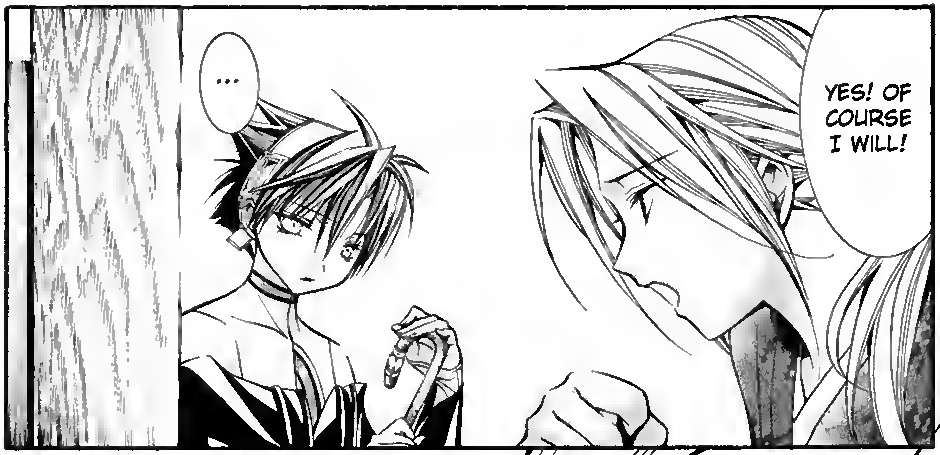

OH, THAT'S THE PIT WE DUG FOR ALL THE FALLEN LEAVES. IT'S REALLY DEEP! IT MUST'VE FILLED UP WITH MUD...
SPLASH
SPLASH
AAGH! SOMEBODY HELP ME!
FW...
WAAH!

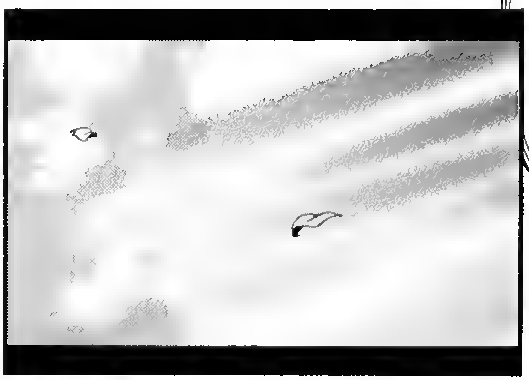

MOM!
HELP ME!
I CAN'T GET OUT. MOM!
SLIP

MARU, ARE YOU...?
YANK YANK
GRIP
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
MOM!
C'MON! HURRY AND PULL ME OUT, YOU OLD MUTT!
YANK
YANK
HURRY!
C'MON ...!
YANK
TRY HARDER, YOU STUPID DOG!

UHN!
GRAB HOLD OF ME!
WHACK
WHAT ARE YOU DOING GOING INTO OTHER PEOPLE'S GARDENS...
SQUOOSH
YELP!
!
MARU'S LEG...

MARU ...
DON'T YOU DARE APOLOGIZE!
NO MATTER. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE! WE DON'T WANT PEOPLE KNOWING YOU WERE HERE.
...NATSUKO?
WHEN YOU WAKE UP ARE YOU GOING TO GO YELL AT YOUR NEIGHBORS?
NOW WE KNOW WHO DID IT.



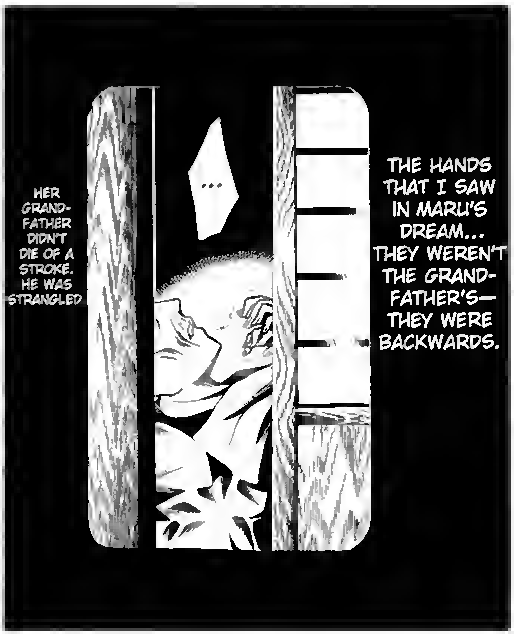


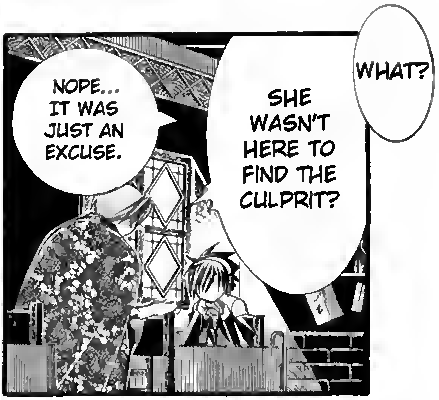
TIME TO WAKE UP.

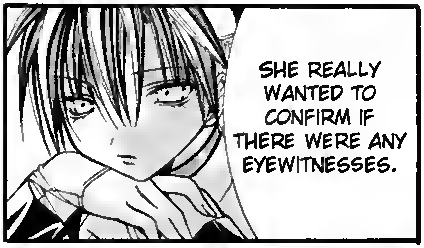
KYOSHI

TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
WHEN I GET HOME I'M GOING TO MAKE THAT WOMAN APOLOGIZE! GOODBYE...
MARU... THANKS TO YOU, I DON'T HAVE TO BE WORRIED ANYMORE.
SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?
EVEN IF YOU COME HOME WITH ME, GRANDFATHER IS NO LONGER THERE...
AND YOU NO LONGER HAVE A PLACE THERE...
UNFORTUNATELY, THAT BAKU SAW TOO... BUT HE DOESN'T SEEM THE TYPE TO INTERFERE IN OTHER PEOPLE'S BUSINESS.

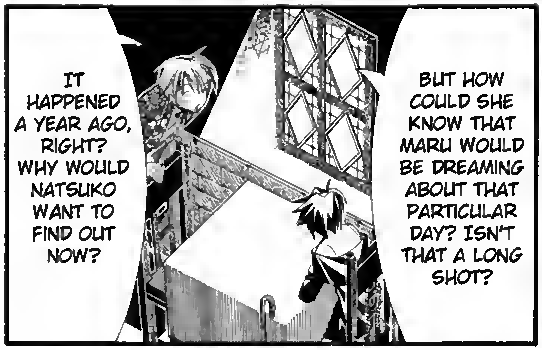
YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO BE WITH US EITHER, RIGHT?
HERE'S A FAREWELL GIFT FOR YOU.
TUG
YOU CAN GO LIMP OFF WHEREVER YOU WANT TO.
YOU ARE ONLY A MANGY STRAY DOG AFTER ALL.

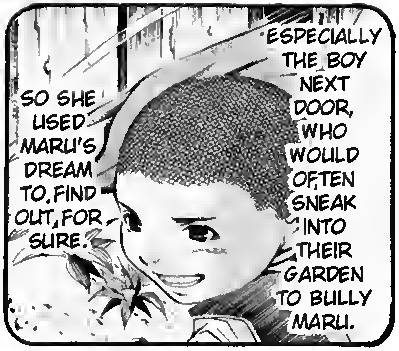

HER GRAND-FATHER DIDN'T DIE OF A STROKE. HE WAS STRANGLED
...
THE HANDS THAT I SAW IN MARU'S DREAM... THEY WEREN'T THE GRAND-FATHER'S— THEY WERE BACKWARDS.





HER GRANDFATHER WAS THE CAUSE OF HER FAMILY'S HARDSHIP.
SHE KILLED HIM OUT OF DESPERATION, BUT AFTERWARDS SHE STARTED TO WORRY THAT SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE SEEN WHAT SHE'D DONE.

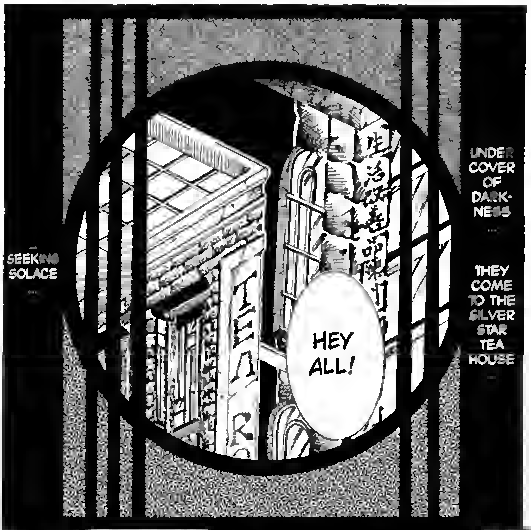

IT HAPPENED A YEAR AGO, RIGHT? WHY WOULD NATSUKO WANT TO FIND OUT NOW?
BUT HOW COULD SHE KNOW THAT MARU WOULD BE DREAMING ABOUT THAT PARTICULAR DAY? ISN'T THAT A LONG SHOT?

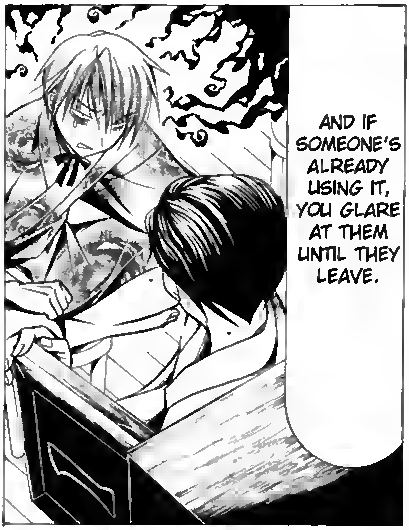

SO SHE USED MARU'S DREAM TO, FIND OUT, FOR SURE.
ESPECIALLY THE BOY NEXT DOOR, WHO WOULD OFTEN SNEAK INTO THEIR GARDEN TO BULLY MARU.

SINCE IT HAPPENED ON THE SAME DAY, IT'S NOT FAR-FETCHED FOR NATSUKO TO THINK MARU WOULD BE DREAMING ABOUT THAT.
"MY GRANDFATHER DIED A YEAR AGO OF A STROKE..."
SHE MAY HAVE BEEN CRYING FROM GUILT THOUGH ...
"I WASN'T BY MY GRANDFATHER'S SIDE WHEN HE PASSED AWAY."
HER TEARS WERE FAKE.
THE NUMBER OF BLOOMS THAT HAD FALLEN AND WHERE THEY FELL WERE THE SAME.
THE CAMELLIAS PROVE THAT.
THAT WAS WHY YOU FOLLOWED AFTER NATSUKO...
MARU HAS NOWHERE TO GO NOW... WHERE WILL HE...
SHE KNEW ALL ALONG AND USED MARU...
...
FOR EXAMPLE ...
MARU'S HOME COULD BE ANYWHERE.
BUT HIRUKO, WE CAN'T KEEP ANY MORE PETS HERE...
THAT'S NOT IT.

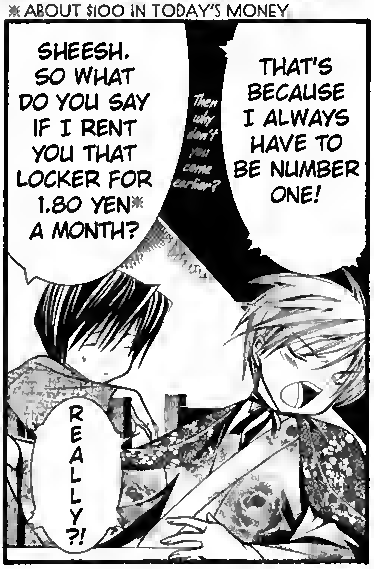
A FEW DAYS LATER AT HIFUMI'S MANSION...
THERE'S LOTS OF SPACE. YOU CAN COME AND GO AS YOU WANT.
THAT FLOWER REMINDS YOU OF THE OLD MAN.
HA HA HA. YOU LIKE IT THERE, HUH.
AS LONG AS HE HAS THAT, HE CAN BE ANYWHERE...

The Forty-Seventh Night: Bathhouse





※ABOUT $100 IN TODAY'S MONEY

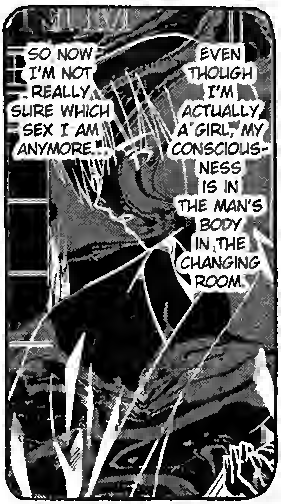

SHEESH. SO WHAT DO YOU SAY IF I RENT YOU THAT LOCKER FOR 1.80 YEN※ A MONTH?
Then why don't you come earlier?
THAT'S BECAUSE I ALWAYS HAVE TO BE NUMBER ONE!
REALLY?!

ONE IS A PROPER YOUNG LADY THAT SITS STILL.

I'M HAVING THIS NIGHTMARE WHERE THERE ARE TWO OF ME IN THE DREAM.

RIGHT, NOW ABOUT MY DREAM.
Killed two birds with one stone ♥

I CAN GUESS AT THE REASON WHY THOUGH.


SO NOW I'M NOT REALLY SURE WHICH SEX I AM ANYMORE...
EVEN THOUGH I'M ACTUALLY A GIRL, MY CONSCIOUSNESS IS IN THE MAN'S BODY IN THE CHANGING ROOM.

MEN
THE OTHER ME IS A MAN IN THE CHANGING ROOM.

menu
OH MY! OH NO...
WOULD YOU BE OKAY, MIZUKI?
YES, YOU'RE A PROPER LADY...
That's the normal reaction.

MEN
MY ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE FATHER BROUGHT ME UP LIKE A BOY. I'VE GOTTEN USED TO SEEING MEN NAKED, SO IT DOESN'T EVEN BOTHER ME.

SO YOUR CONFUSION ABOUT YOUR GENDER IS MAKING YOU HAVE THIS NIGHTMARE?
BUT!
NOW I CONSTANTLY KEEP THINKING ABOUT THAT.
WHY AREN'T I A BOY?
WHAT IF I WERE A BOY?
THE CUSTOMERS DON'T EVEN TREAT ME LIKE A FEMALE.
CLATTER
SOME-THING A BOY COULD DO?
SINCE IT'S A DREAM ANYHOW, THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO DO IF I WERE A BOY.
CLICK
ARGH, ENOUGH WITH THIS TALK! LET'S GO INTO MY DREAM!
IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE NOTHING TO YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE A GUY, BUT IT'S SOMETHING I CAN'T DO WITHOUT YOUR HELP...

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

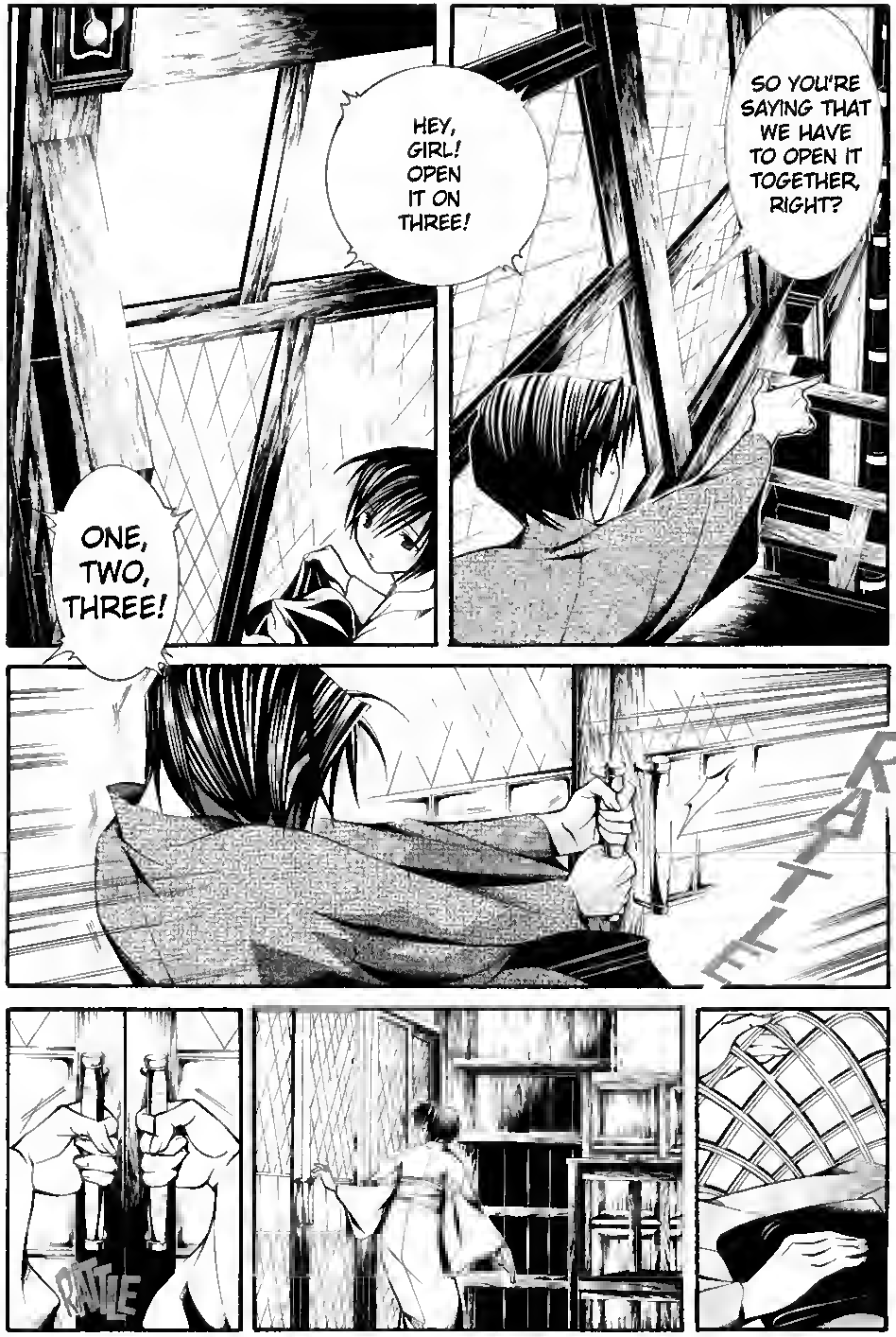
CLATTER
OH, YOU SHOULD BE ON THE OTHER SIDE.

I REALLY AM A BOY.
UH, YEAH.
MEN
WO
SEE, HIRUKO.
SO WHY CAN'T I DO IT THEN?
THE THING THAT YOU COULD ONLY DO IF YOU WERE A BOY?
YES.

I WANT TO BATHE IN THE MEN'S BATH!
BECAUSE OF MY CHAUVINISTIC FATHER, THE MEN'S BATH IS MORE LUXURIOUS THAN THE WOMEN'S BATH!
I'M ALWAYS WANTED TO TRY IT!
IT DIDN'T MATTER IF I WAS HIS OWN CHILD, THE MEN'S BATH WAS OFF LIMITS TO ANY FEMALE. IT'S BEEN INGRAINED IN ME SO MUCH THAT I CAN'T DISOBEY...
MY FATHER DISCRIMINATES AGAINST WOMEN.
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
...
JUST BECAUSE YOU TOOK A BATH IN THERE DOESN'T REALLY MAKE YOU A MAN... ANYWAYS, COULDN'T YOU DO IT IN REALITY?

SO I WANT TO TRY IT ONCE... IF ONLY IN MY DREAM!
AH! IT WON'T BUDGE!
RATTL
OH, THE FEMALE MITSU-BAYASHI MOVED.
RATTLE
YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING, HIRUKO!
SEE! I CAN'T GET IN!
RATTL

HMM. YOU MAY BE TWO DIFFERENT BODIES IN YOUR DREAM, BUT YOU'RE STILL ONLY ONE PERSON.
PERHAPS YOU HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER, MOVING IN SYNC TO ACHIEVE WHAT YOU WANT.
YOU KNOW, FOR A PERSON WHO DREAMED OF BECOMING A BOY, I FIND IT ODD THAT THERE'S THIS FEMININE VERSION OF YOU.
...THAT IN THE BOTTOM OF YOUR HEART, YOU WANT TO BE A PROPER MISS LIKE HER TOO?
?!
COULD IT BE...
HEH... SHE'S CONFUSED.
HUH?
ME?
Baffled


HEY, GIRL! OPEN IT ON THREE!
SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT WE HAVE TO OPEN IT TOGETHER, RIGHT?
ONE, TWO, THREE!
RATTLE
RATTLE

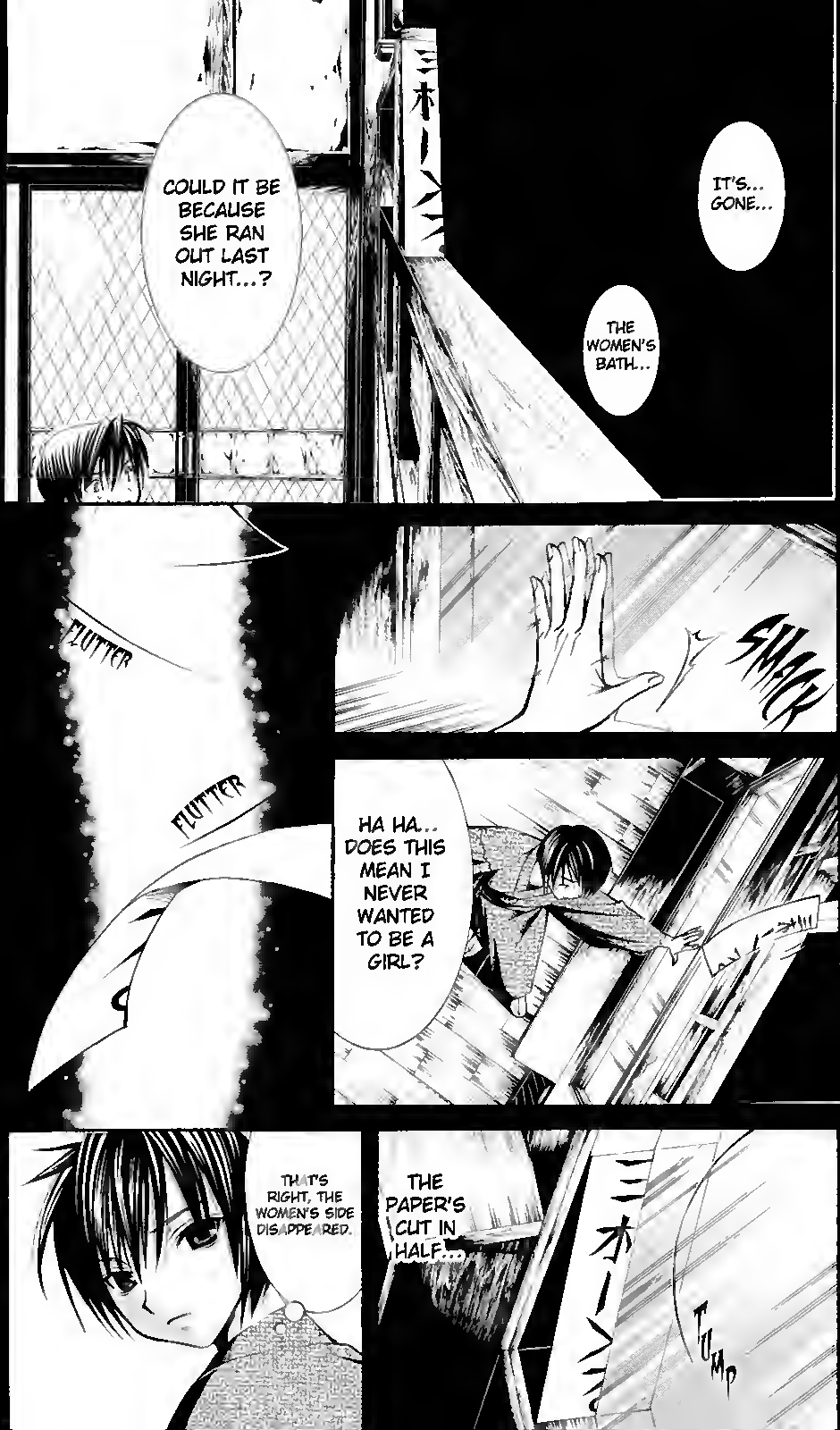
AGH! THAT DIDN'T WORK! C'MON, WORK WITH ME HERE, YOU SLOWPOKE!
I JUST WANT TO GET INTO THE BATH! THAT'S WHY I HATE GIRLS!
FLINCH
YOU STUPID GIRL!
THUD THUD

I'LL WRITE DOWN ON A PIECE OF PAPER WHAT I WANT TO DO SO THAT IT'S CLEAR.
NOW I'LL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW'S DREAM.
CHATTER
TCH!
HEY, SHE RAN OFF.
IT'LL TAKE FOREVER AT THIS RATE...
WE HAVE TO BE IN SYNC...
I KNOW!
I SEE. SO THIS WAY YOU CAN WORK TOGETHER FOR A COMMON GOAL, INCREASING YOUR ODDS.
*ENTER THE BATH.

※ENTER THE BATH.

湯槽に入る
※ENTER THE BATH
WOMEN
TIME TO WAKE UP.

THE NEXT NIGHT IN MITSUBAYASHI'S ROOM
TONIGHT I'LL FINALLY BE ABLE TO DO IT...
HA HA. EVERYTHING'S ALL SET. I WON'T NEED HIRUKO TONIGHT!
ZZZ
ZZZ
?!


COULD IT BE BECAUSE SHE RAN OUT LAST NIGHT...?
IT'S... GONE...
THE WOMEN'S BATH...
FLUTTER
FLUTTER
SNACK
HA HA... DOES THIS MEAN I NEVER WANTED TO BE A GIRL?
THAT'S RIGHT, THE WOMEN'S SIDE DISAPPEARED.
THE PAPER'S CUT IN HALF...
TUMP

!
WELL, FINE THEN. IF IT'S JUST ME, THERE SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM!
ミオーン
HA HA HA HA HA HA!
NOW I CAN ACHIEVE THE GOAL THAT I WROTE DOWN.
CLATTER
WHA..
HUH?
?!
WHOOSH
SOME-THING'S PUSHING ME DOWN ...
ACK!
IT HURTS!
AGH!

AAAAH!!

THE NEXT DAY AT THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE
HIFUMI MISUMI!
GAZE
MI... MITSU-BAYASHI?! WHY ARE YOU DRESSED LIKE THAT?!
SHUT UP! I CAN'T TAKE THAT AWFUL DREAM ANYMORE! JUST GIVE IT HERE!
YOU HAVE TO GIVE ME BACK THAT KEY! NOW!
YOU MEAN THE KEY TO THE LOCKER?
TELL ME WHY.

湯槽ホーン
※ENTER THE BATH
THE ONE THAT SAID, "ENTER THE BATH"?
THAT'S RIGHT.
I PUT MYSELF UNDER A SPELL SO THAT I WOULD FOLLOW WHATEVER THE INSTRUCTIONS WERE ON THE PAPER TO MAKE MY WISH COME TRUE.
BUT ...
THE PAPER THAT I WROTE MY DESIRE ON... BECAUSE THE WOMAN'S SIDE DISAPPEARED...
...THE REMAINING HALF FELL AGAINST THE MIRROR.
I DIDN'T KNOW MYSELF AT FIRST... BUT WHEN I WOKE UP, I FIGURED IT OUT...
WHEN THAT HALF OF THE PAPER REFLECTED IN THE MIRROR, THE MEANING HAD CHANGED ENTIRELY...!

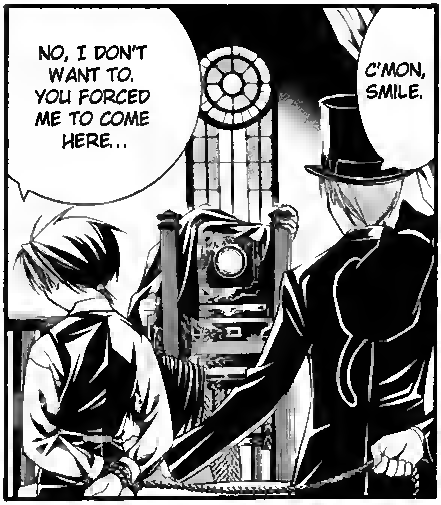
"MITSUBAYASHI TO GO TO THE CROSSED OUT 1."
ニホーメ。
CREAK
CREAK
AND IT CAME TRUE. I FOLLOWED THE INSTRUCTIONS AND GOT SQUISHED INTO THAT TINY LOCKER...
OH...
SINCE I HAD PUT A LOCK ON IT IN REALITY, IT WAS ALSO LOCKED IN MY DREAM. THAT'S WHY I NEED THE KEY. OTHERWISE, I'LL BE TRAPPED FOREVER...

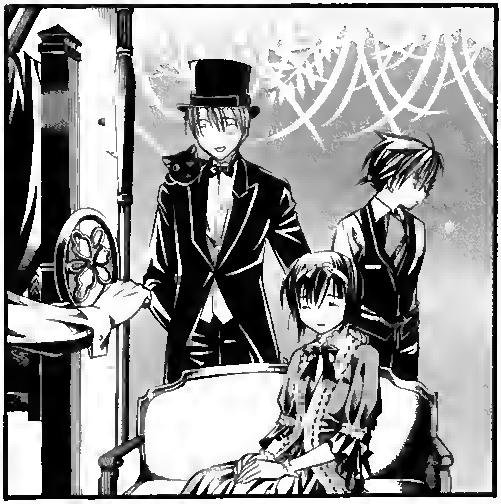
THIS IS ALL BECAUSE I WANTED TO BE A BOY...!
UHN!
AAGH! I DON'T EVER WANT TO SEE SUCH A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE AGAIN!
I'M SORRY I EVER WANTED TO BE A BOY!
I'LL BE A PROPER LADY FROM NOW ON...!
SO THAT'S WHY YOU'RE DRESSED LIKE THAT. BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR NIGHTMARE ABOUT BATHING IN THE MEN'S BATH...
THAT'S WHY I NEED THE KEY!
HEE HEE
IT LOOKS LIKE THIS NIGHT-MARE MADE HER REALIZE WHICH GENDER SHE REALLY WANTED TO BE.
PERHAPS DEEP DOWN, MITSUBAYASHI WANTED IT THAT WAY...

WHACK
No chance!
NO! THIS KEY IS FOR MY NUMBER ONE LOCKER.
HIFUMI, ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE BACK THE KEY?
SO...
YOU!
Oh my...
THAT HURTS! I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO BE A PROPER LADY! YOU SHOULD TRY AND BE MORE LIKE MIZUKI!
Jeez... Why don't you just remove the lock altogether? There are other solutions, you know.
THAT'S WHY I PUT A RIBBON IN MY HAIR! DIDN'T YOU NOTICE?!

The Forty-Eighth Night: Photo

SIGN: KOGA PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO





LIAR. YOU JUST WANTED A PHOTO OF YOU AND MIZUKI TOGETHER BUT WERE TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK.
ULP!
HEY, THIS IS FOR YOUR SAKE. YOU MAY LIVE A LONG, MISERABLE LIFE SINCE YOU'RE A BAKU, BUT MIZUKI AND I AREN'T GOING TO BE AROUND FOREVER. I WANTED TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO REMEMBER US BY.

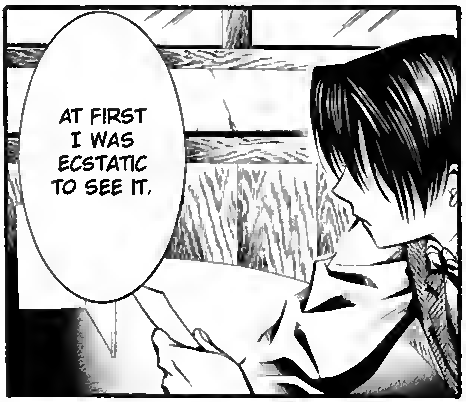
FLASH
HERE WE GO.
PHEW... I THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO STEAL MY SOUL.
HA HA. THAT'S JUST A SUPER-STITION.
BUT LOOK AT THE PHOTO-GRAPHER...
DAZE
UGH... HE DOES LOOK LIKE HIS SOUL'S BEEN TAKEN...
IS ANYTHING THE MATTER? MAYBE IT'LL HELP IF YOU TALK ABOUT IT?

AH. I'M SORRY... I HAVEN'T BEEN SLEEPING WELL...
ALL BECAUSE OF THAT PHOTO...
A GIRL'S LEGS... A ROPE... IS THIS—?!
YES, IT'S A PHOTO OF A GIRL WHO HUNG HERSELF.

IDIOT! DON'T KEEP SUCH MORBID PHOTOS! THROW IT AWAY!
I CAN'T!
I SAY "COLLEAGUE," BUT WE WERE IN TWO DIFFERENT FIELDS. I'M ONLY A PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER, TAKING KEEPSAKE PHOTOS...
...WHEREAS JIMI WAS A NEWSPAPER JOURNALIST SENT TO COVER WARS AND NATURAL DISASTERS. HIS PICTURES WERE VIOLENT AND FULL OF DRAMA.
THIS IS THE LAST PHOTO TAKEN BY MY PHOTO-GRAPHER COLLEAGUE, JIMI. HE PASSED AWAY JUST THE OTHER DAY.
IT'S A TRIBUTE TO HIM. I CAN'T GET RID OF IT SO EASILY...
BUT BECAUSE OF MY POOR HEALTH, AND MY FATHER DYING, I HAD TO TAKE OVER THIS STUDIO.
TRUTHFULLY, I WANTED TO TAKE EXCITING PHOTOS LIKE JIMI...

BUT WITH YOUR ADMIRATION FOR THE DRAMATIC PHOTOS THAT JIMI TOOK, YOU WERE ALSO JEALOUS... AM I RIGHT?
...
YES, THAT'S CORRECT.
BUT NOW HE'S DEAD.
HE LOST HIS FOOTING AND FELL TO HIS DEATH.
HE WENT AGAINST HIS CALLING— HE WANTED TO TAKE A SERENE PHOTO, BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE. HOWEVER..
EVEN UP TO HIS DYING MOMENT HE WAS ABLE TO TAKE A DRAMATIC PHOTO OF A HANGING!
I ENVY HIS GENIUS!

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO TAKE A PICTURE LIKE THIS. IT SYMBOLIZES EVERYTHING I'VE LONGED FOR, SO I CAN'T GET RID OF IT.
HA! AND NOW I STARTED HAVING A DREAM ABOUT IT...


AT FIRST I WAS ECSTATIC TO SEE IT.

IS THAT WHY YOU'RE NOT SLEEPING?
YES... IT'S A NIGHTMARE.

BUT IT WAS A CORPSE, SO...
I BECAME MORE SCARED EVERY NIGHT AND STARTED IMAGINING THESE HORRIBLE THOUGHTS.
THERE IS A PHOTO BEING PROJECTED IN MY DREAM.

WHAT IF THE ROPE HOLDING UP THE CORPSE BROKE?
WHAT IF THE CORPSE STARTED MOVING?
WHAT IF IT STARTED COMING TOWARDS ME?
WHAT IF IT TRIED TO STRANGLE ME AND TAKE ME WITH IT TO THE NETHER WORLD?

EACH NIGHT IT GETS CLOSER TO ME...
MY NEXT DREAM MAY BE MY LAST!
THAT'S WHY HE'S NOT SLEEPING.
BUT IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW.
HIRUKO'S A BAKU THAT EATS NIGHT-MARES!
HEY.
I'm going home to sleep
I'VE HEARD OF YOU! PLEASE, CAN YOU HELP ME?!
I'LL REPAY YOU WITH LOTS OF PHOTOS.
DO THAT, AND I'LL MAKE SURE YOU DON'T WAKE UP.
WELL... I AM A LITTLE CURIOUS.

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

SHE'S GOT A KNIFE! SHE DIDN'T HAVE THAT BEFORE!
PHEW! I'M SAVED. OH!
SHE'S COME RIGHT UP TO YOU. LUCKILY, IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THIS IS YOUR LAST DREAM.
I SEE...
OR, DO YOU THINK THAT SHE'LL USE THE KNIFE TO BREAK OUT OF THE PHOTO? YOUR ANXIETY IS CAUSING YOU TO DREAM OF THE PHOTO LIKE THIS.
ARE YOU NAIVELY HOPING THAT SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO GET YOU BECAUSE SHE'S IN A PHOTO?
THERE'S ALSO A PART OF ME THAT DOESN'T WANT TO STOP IT.
BUT...
I WOULD IF I COULD!
KOGA, IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET RID OF THE PHOTO, THEN YOU SHOULD STOP MAKING YOUR NIGHTMARE WORSE WITH YOUR IMAGINATION...
THAT'S WHY HIS THOUGHTS HAVE BECOME REAL

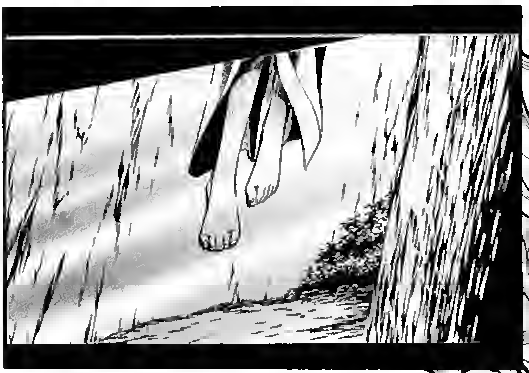
IF SHE CAN MOVE LIKE THAT, THEN SHE'S NOT A CORPSE.
WHICH MEANS, THIS IS JUST A PHOTO OF A GIRL. SO IN REALITY, JIMI WASN'T AS GREAT AS I THOUGHT.
I KNOW IT DOESN'T REALLY MAKE SENSE. BUT MAYBE THAT'S WHY I'M HAVING THIS NIGHTMARE...
I SEE. I CAN SYMPATHIZE WITH THAT, BUT SHE WILL STRANGLE YOU IN YOUR NEXT DREAM.
EXACTLY! THEN WHY DON'T WE TRY THIS?
I WANT YOU TO KILL HER FOR GOOD!
IF I CAUSE HER DEATH, THEN THE CORPSE IS A PRODUCT OF MY WORK. I WON'T HAVE TO FEAR IT ANYMORE.
YES... THAT'S IT. THE PHOTO WILL BECOME MY WORK IN THE DREAM. THE PERFECT PICTURE I'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF!

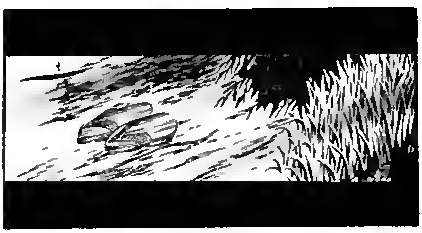
FOOSH
SINCE I'VE DESIGNATED THIS AS A "PHOTO" IN MY DREAM, I CAN'T ENTER IT. BUT AS A BAKU, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO, RIGHT?
YES.
CORPSE, HUH?
FINE. THEN WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?
TAKE THE WEAPON FROM HER.
AND?
HMM... HOW TO KILL HER? IT'D BE BEST TO RETURN EVERYTHING THE WAY IT WAS.
HIRUKO, PUT THE NOOSE AROUND HER NECK.

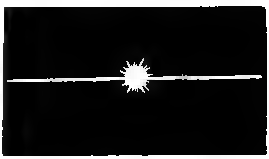
DRAG
OKAY.
DRAG

OH ...!
SHE'S DEAD.

FI... FINALLY!
THE FINEST PICTURE I EVER MADE.
THIS IS MY WORK. MINE...







TIME TO WAKE UP.

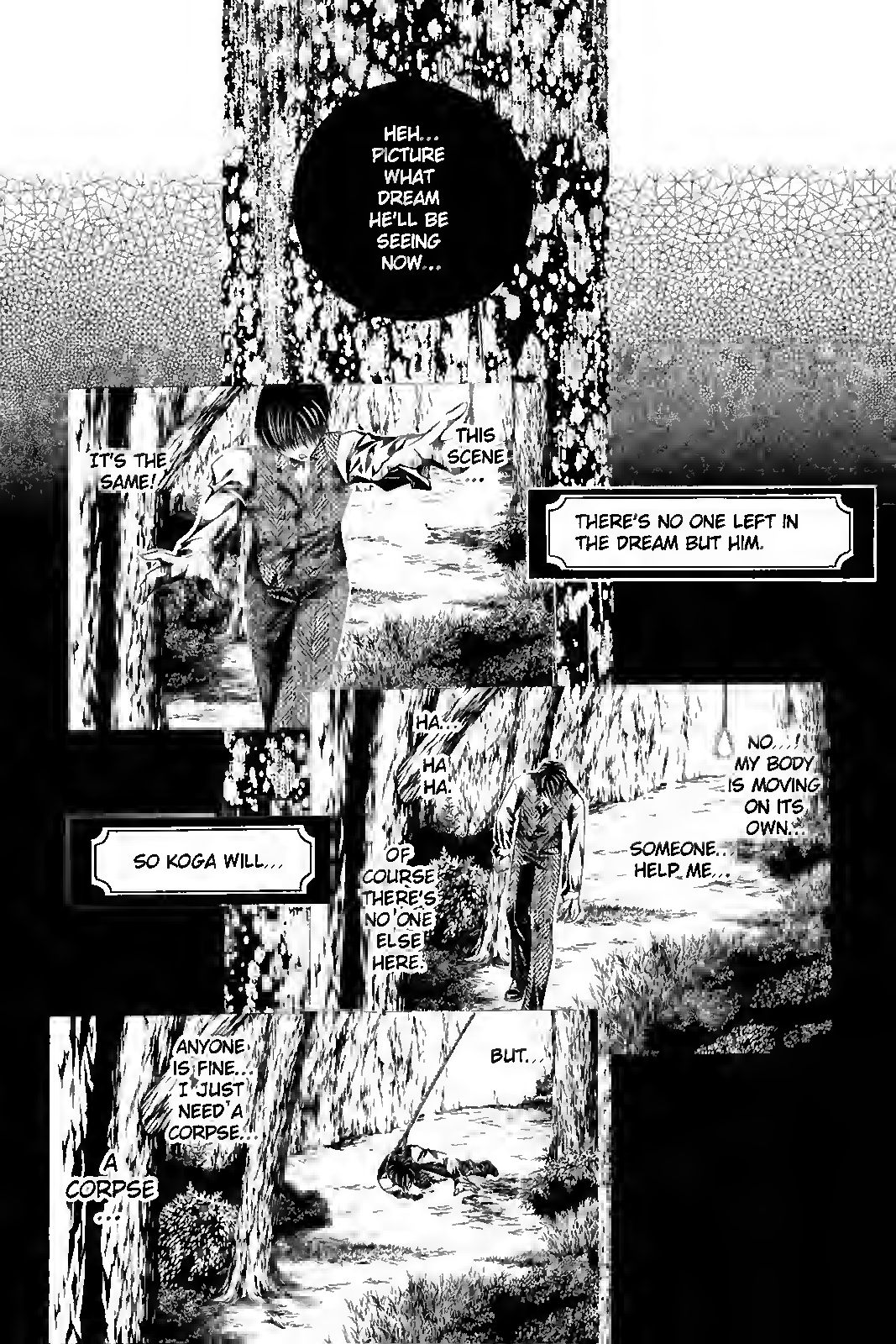
THE NEXT DAY
THIS IS THE PLACE.
WH-WHY IS THE ROPE STILL HERE?!
AND THOSE CHILDREN...!
HEY, YOU KIDS! A PERSON DIED THERE.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE PLAYING THERE...
THIS TREE?

NO ONE DIED HERE.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WE ALWAYS PLAY HERE.
SEE? WE USE THE ROPE TO CLIMB UP THE TREE.
?!

WAS IT ALL A MISUNDER-STANDING?!
THE LEGS WEREN'T FROM SOMEONE WHO HUNG THEMSELF?!
HEE
HEE

MY PERFECT PICTURE!
IN THAT CASE ...
THE CORPSE I CREATED ...
MY PICTURE ...
CHILD'S PLAY. THERE WAS NO CORPSE?
HA... HA HA...
WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL TOO.
BUT A MAN DID DIE OVER BY THAT CLIFF...
NO! IT CAN'T BE!!
THAT'S RIGHT. ALL I NEED IS A CORPSE...
ANYONE WOULD DO. A CORPSE HANGING FROM THIS TREE...
A CORPSE ...
A PICTURE BETTER THAN JIMI'S...
What's the matter with him?
Who knows?

HE WAS WEIRD.
銀星館
喫茶
TO GO AND CREATE A CORPSE IN HIS DREAM BECAUSE HE WAS ENRAPTURED BY THAT SHOCKING PHOTO.
Our photo turned out nice.
I DON'T THINK THAT WAS EVER A CORPSE.
WHAT?
HE MUST HAVE FELT REALLY INFERIOR TO HIS FRIEND...
AND WITH JIMI'S LAST PHOTO SO AMAZING.
NO.
IT COULD POSSIBLY BE A PICTURE THAT JIMI TOOK ACCIDENTALLY WHEN HE FELL, BUT IF IT WASN'T...
WOULD A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER HAVE TAKEN SUCH A BAD PHOTO OF A CORPSE? THE COMPOSITION IS BAD.
RIGHT... YOU ONLY SEE HER FEET.
BUT IF THERE WAS NEVER ANY CORPSE, THEN THERE WAS NO POINT TO HIS DREAM. IF HE REALIZES THAT...
YES... THE CORPSE WILL DISAPPEAR FROM HIS DREAM.
BUT HIS JEALOUSY OF JIMI AND HIS DESIRE TO CREATE A SHOCKING PHOTO WILL STILL EXIST. HIS OBSESSION WON'T BE SATED UNTIL HE FINDS A NEW CORPSE...


HEH... PICTURE WHAT DREAM HE'LL BE SEEING NOW...
IT'S THE SAME!
THIS SCENE...
THERE'S NO ONE LEFT IN THE DREAM BUT HIM.
SO KOGA WILL...
HA... HA HA. OF COURSE THERE'S NO ONE ELSE HERE.
NO...! MY BODY IS MOVING ON ITS OWN...
SOMEONE... HELP ME...
ANYONE IS FINE... I JUST NEED A CORPSE...
A CORPSE...
BUT...

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR 7: END

あとがき

AFTERWORD

後書キ AFTERWORD

Hello, It's Shin Mashiba! We're at volume seven, thanks to you! I still have much to improve, but thanks very much for buying it!

I want to thank my editor Yuki Saeki and everyone involved for helping me thus far.

♦ A big thank you to:
My editor Yuki Saeki
Editor-in-chief
Everyone that was involved with making this book <Everyone at Square Enix>

♦ My lovely assistants:
Katsumi Arai
Takecchi
MOAI

♦ My special friends & assistants:
Wan wan Shiroi
NEEMA
Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

感謝

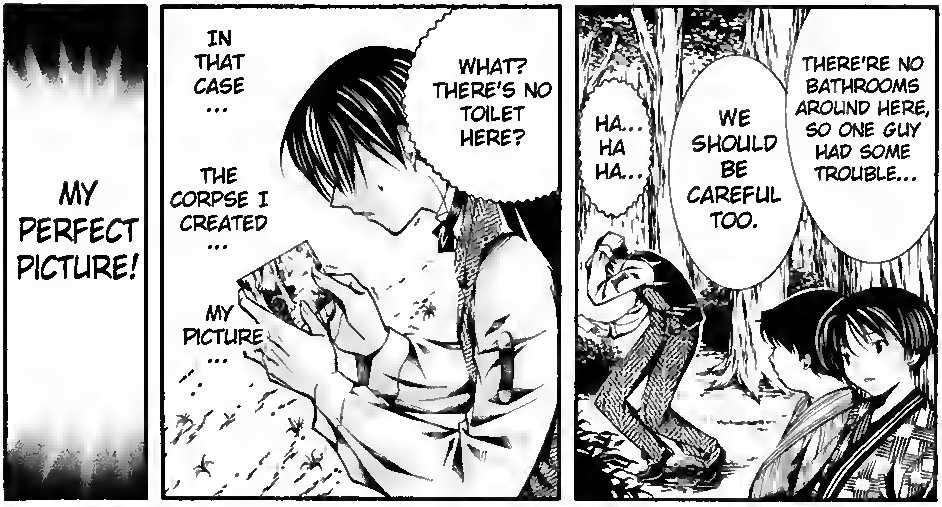
THANK YOU!

No meaning behind this

The next few pages are the usual guest pages. Shiroi did the alternative telling of the manga and also did the tag team manga (where we take turns drawing a panel) with NEEMA and myself.

Page 178 is a collaborative effort by the three of us. We each drew different parts of the bodies, which had disastrous results..

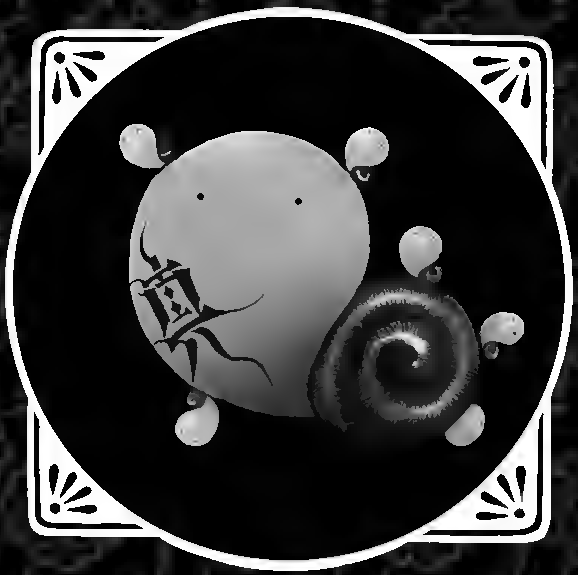
THE HALF NIGHT: AN ARIA BEYOND DEATH


MY PERFECT PICTURE!
IN THAT CASE ...
THE CORPSE I CREATED ...
MY PICTURE ...
WHAT? THERE'S NO TOILET HERE?
HA... HA HA...
WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL TOO.
THERE'RE NO BATHROOMS AROUND HERE, SO ONE GUY HAD SOME TROUBLE...

TAG TEAM MANGA

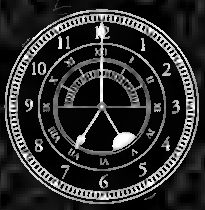
♥ Love & Peace
LOUNGE BAR
BAKI
RUSH!
2-CHOME-BANCHI TANTEIDOKORO

Dreams on the menu in this volume: a childhood friendship that has lost its innocence, Kairi caught up in his own delusion, a sinister trap set for a Baku, an inn with deadly secrets, a sea of drowned memories, a mother's forgotten item, a man confined to an elevator, and Hifumi's family affairs.



SHIN MASHIBA

I still don't know much about Hifumi and Shima.



Shin Mashiba's first manga, *Yumekui Kenbun* (Nightmare Inspector), premiered in *Monthly Stencil*, a shojo magazine, in December 2001 and was then serialized in *Monthly G Fantasy* from 2003 to 2007. Mashiba-san's own nightmares include being forced to eat 50 living slugs and being chased by time.

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR: YUMEKUI KENBUN ⑦

Shin Mashiba

Translation: Gemma Collinge

Touch-up Art & Lettering: James Gaubatz

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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